

FIESTA SYSTEM IN YUCATAN:  
POPULAR RELIGION, IDENTITY AND SOCIOECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

By  
FRANCISCO J. FERNANDEZ

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1994

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA LIBRARIES

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all I wish to express my gratitude to the gremieros,<sup>1</sup> the cargadores<sup>2</sup> and all the people who make possible the patronal fiestas in the State of Yucatán. Yucatecans have a debt with them in the maintenance of some important cultural characteristics that make us be "Yucatecos."

I would like to thank Dr. Allan F. Burns for his critical support, but above all for his friendship that is one of the conditions for any study in anthropology. I also wish to express my intellectual debt to him even though I find it difficult to do so in English, a language which I have not completely mastered to express my self adequately.

I also want to thank Dr. Paul L. Doughty, Dr. Gerald F. Murray, Dr. Murdo MacLeod and Dr. Hernan Vera for serving on my graduate committee.

I am very grateful to the Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas of the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, to

---

<sup>1</sup> Gremiero is the name given to the members of a gremio (craft-guild), an organization of men and/or women who help to sponsor the patronal fiestas in the State of Yucatán. The main characteristics of the gremio will be explained in chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>2</sup> Cargadores is an organization of men who are in charge of the custody of the images during the time of fiesta.

the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología and to the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes for giving me the opportunity to develop this dissertation as part of my labor within the institution and for their financial support.

I also take this opportunity to thank E. Montañez, W. Concha and G. Negroe not only for their part in the production and editing of the video but also for the observations and comments that they made during the fieldwork, all of which helped to focus my attention on some aspects of my work that otherwise would have gone unnoticed.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	ii
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	vi
ABSTRACT . . . . .	vii
CHAPTERS	
1 INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Popular Religion in Yucatán: Concepts and Preliminary Ideas . . . . .	1
The Research Topic . . . . .	4
Method and Fieldwork . . . . .	6
Research Objectives . . . . .	19
The Contents of the Dissertation . . . . .	20
2 A SOCIOECONOMICAL PERSPECTIVE . . . . .	22
An Overview of Yucatán . . . . .	22
Mérida, the Peninsula's Central Point . . . . .	27
Hunucma and Tetiz: the Rural Zones . . . . .	36
The Regional Context . . . . .	36
Sisal: a Fishing Port . . . . .	52
3 PATRONAL FIESTAS AS POPULAR RELIGION . . . . .	63
Popular Culture . . . . .	63
Popular Religion . . . . .	72
Fiesta. The Construction of the Concept . . . . .	74
Social Identities . . . . .	79
Patronal Fiestas, Popular Religion and Identity . . . . .	87
4 A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO PATRONAL FIESTAS OF YUCATAN . . . . .	96
Historical Outline of Yucatecan Patronal Fiestas . . . . .	96
The History of the Images of the Fiestas Studied . . . . .	111
The Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas . . . . .	111
The Virgen de la Asunción de Tetiz, the Poor of God . . . . .	116
The Señor de Sisal . . . . .	118
Patronal Fiestas of Mérida, Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal. A Historical Outline . . . . .	119



	Mérida . . . . .	119
	Hunucma . . . . .	134
	Tetiz . . . . .	141
	Sisal . . . . .	143
5	CONTEMPORARY PATRONAL FIESTAS . . . . .	145
	The Church . . . . .	146
	The <u>Cargadores</u> . . . . .	154
	The <u>Gremios</u> . . . . .	160
	<u>Remate</u> , <u>Vaquería</u> , Dance and Bullfights . .	182
	The Circulation of the Images and Other Celebrations . . . . .	187
6	CLOSING: FINAL ANALYTICAL COMMENTS . . . . .	197
	Official Religion-Popular Religion . . . .	197
	<u>Gremios</u> and <u>Cargadores</u> . . . . .	201
	Occupational Structure and Consumption of the Fiesta . . . . .	202
	Fiestas and Identity . . . . .	205
	APPENDIX . . . . .	209
	ARCHIVAL REFERENCES . . . . .	217
	REFERENCES . . . . .	218
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . . . .	229

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1--Socioeconomic Regions of the State of Yucatán . . . . .	25
Figure 2--Location of the Communities and their Hinterland . . . . .	41

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

FIESTA SYSTEM IN YUCATAN:  
POPULAR RELIGION, IDENTITY AND SOCIOECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

By

Francisco J. Fernández

APRIL 1994

Chairperson: Dr. Allan F. Burns  
Major Department: Anthropology

The primary purpose of this investigation is to analyze the fiesta system in the northwest of the state of Yucatán in the process of construction of a model of fiesta in the state.

I show that the fiesta expresses different aspects of the social organization and world view of the communities in which it is present as one of the main elements that conforms the popular religiosity. Among these aspects the dissertation deals with the question of the opposition between official and popular religion from Gramsci's perspective and within the fiesta time and context.

The fiesta also expresses different levels of identity according to the context in which it is performed. Special attention is given to the fact that as a collective phenomenon, specific identities are constituted in a process

of social contrast. The analysis also establishes the relations between the socioeconomic conditions of the places studied here with the population's interest in the fiesta as a social event and as an economic enterprise.

Methodologically the dissertation employs a comparative approach that includes four "communities" of different size and social conditions. Visual anthropology was also used in the fieldwork to gather information and to establish a interactive dialogue with informants.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Popular Religion in Yucatán: Concepts and Preliminary Ideas

In order to avoid confusion in the future presentation of different and more subtle arguments concerning "popular religion," it is necessary to present a working definition of the concept of popular religion. Popular religion refers to the group of practices and beliefs found in a relationship of opposition, subordination or indifference with regard to the official view of the orthodox beliefs of a church. In the case of Yucatán, the Catholic Church is the primary religious institution. Popular religion is an all-embracing concept which gathers together many different religious phenomena that primarily occur outside of the Church. It is always important to specify the modes and contexts relevant to any research project concerning this theme.

The many different forms of expression used in popular religion in Yucatán spread across different areas and their roots are to be found in different kinds of religious belief. Woodrick (1989) presents religion in Yucatán in terms of Catholic and Mayan elements. According to Woodrick, "Ethnographic discussions of folk catholicism as it has been

and continues to be practiced in Yucatan, usually include separate discussion of the pagan 'religion' and the orthodox Catholic 'religion'" (1989:4). However, within these two broad categories there are still a great variety of themes to be discussed and perspectives to be offered.

With regard to the pre-hispanic religious forms, identified by Woodrick as "pagan," one can observe that the dominant idea present is that of continuity between the Maya society of the past and that of present day Yucatán. In spite of the processes of conquest and colonialization experienced by the New World and by Yucatán in particular, the Maya world view was not destroyed; rather the Maya adopted social and cultural survival strategies that enabled them to exist as a group through the colonial period and up to the present. The studies of the forms and persistence of Maya ceremonies like the Uahi col and the Chaa chac are examples of this type of research (Hanks 1990).

Woodrick's discussion of the work done on religion in Yucatán is less convincing when compared to the studies carried out by Farriss (1984) and Bartolomé (1988). These authors look into the organizational forms of Catholic orthodoxy in Yucatán from the point of view of the indigenous world view.

Thus, their work is concerned not only with the survival of pre-hispanic forms but also with the mechanisms used by the Maya to conserve their culture within

organizational forms foreign to their own indigenous social organization.

Here, for example, are the cofradías or religious societies which, in Woodrick's theory establish a link between the pagan and the orthodox Catholic universes, thus leading to studies which embrace both world views. The areas that have until now attracted the least attention are those which are concerned with the contemporary, organizational analysis of the forms imposed during the colonial period.

In the realm of Roman Catholic religion, studies of this type in Yucatán would include the analysis of the novenas,<sup>1</sup> rosaries and patron saint fiestas, among others. However, if these supposedly pure (but not for this, less popular) Spanish Catholic forms are examined the presence of American tints can be noted. Even in the social spheres that display least acculturation, the force of time has seemed to introduce, openly or surreptitiously, peculiarities that highlight the differences with the customs of peninsular Spain.

One final area of the study of popular religion is the analysis of the proliferation of protestant sects. Studies of this phenomenon in general aim to reveal the conditions of production and reproduction of forms that precede the Catholic tradition of 500 years.

---

<sup>1</sup> Novena or novenario is a traditional Catholic prayer ritual.

Something similar can be said of Yucatecan protestantism, which in spite of eliminating the saints and their names from the calendar, cannot altogether abandon that which its followers manifest as Maya or local characteristics.

#### The Research Topic

The interest in developing a research programa which would ultimately conclude in this doctoral dissertation goes back many years. Principally, it is concerned with a process of anthropological and sociological formation that began in 1978, in a specific context (Latin America, México, Yucatán, Mérida). In those days, Mexican anthropology was dominated by the campesino, illustrated by the tendency to dedicate all social science research to this end. This tendency in the social sciences embraced areas such as the penetration of capitalism into Mexican agriculture, the processes of pauperization for the peasant masses, the descampesinización and recampesinización of the campesinos, social movements in which the campesino held the leading role (Hewitt 1988).<sup>2</sup>

A large amount of the time and space in the national anthropological publications of México in the 70's was dedicated to the study of agrarian México. Many of the discussions of the period were based upon the contributions of Marxism to an understanding of the social reality and in the attempt to reach a theoretical definition of campesino.

---

<sup>2</sup> See also Krotz (1991 and 1993).



It is not always easy to swim against the current, especially when there are few people near by with whom to discuss. In 1982, I began to work on my undergraduate thesis (Fernández 1984) in which I sought to present and apply a different approximation of anthropology to that which until then I and my fellow students had known. Basically, this was concerned with working on a problem that paradoxically had stayed outside the realms of Mexican anthropology, at least as a research topic: that is, the study of culture.

I was, however, convinced that Marxism, which until then had been used as a means of analysis in Yucatán, lacked the elements necessary for the elaboration of my project. I found then that a different reading of Marxism could open a door to the study of culture, thus enabling me to work on this area without being labelled a "culturalist" with all the negatives connotations and overtones of the period.

The Marxist theory that I applied to my work on the migration process in Yucatán was based on the contributions made by Gramsci to Marxist theory, and in particular on his studies of folklore in the "Cuadernos de la Cárcel" (Gramsci 1976). Thus, by taking a Gramscian perspective on culture it was necessary to consider it within the same space and limitations as merchandise, production, distribution and consumption networks.

My project also took into account Bourdieu's studies (1973 and 1981) on culture which provided me with a clearer

understanding of the power and distribution of institutional structures.

My master's thesis applied this theoretical perspective to the analysis of a very different phenomenon: the patron saint fiesta. By this means, my first systematic approaches to patron saint fiestas in Yucatán occurred in 1986, and concerned an area of study that, for a variety of reasons, had not previously been considered an anthropological matter in Yucatán, unlike in other parts of Mesoamerica (Fernández 1988a).

This first experience fuelled a growing interest to examine at greater depth the patronal fiestas in Yucatán, and thus the following dissertation represents the results of approximately seven years of first- and second-hand contacts with different Yucatecan patronal fiestas.

#### Method and Fieldwork

One of the first decisions to be taken by the reader of this work will be concerned with the author himself, that is, a Latin American, Mexican, Yucatecan anthropologist carrying out field work in his own cultural world and among his fellow countrymen. The socio-cultural distance between the object of study and the researcher is small, and so we are referring to a project in which the everyday context of the social actors is inserted into the everyday context of the researcher. Mérida's urban problems, the conflicts and social difficulties of the Henequen Zone and the plans for

its modernization, and the crises experienced in the fishing sector are all part of the everyday life experience of each and every Yucatecan.

I often found myself experiency state and regional issues in the same way as the people I studied. However, the historical antecedents of social class, affiliation to different religious and political groups, rural life and in some cases the spatial distribution of the city, contributed to ensuring that the socio-cultural distance did not eliminate the element of anthropological surprise that gave rise to anthropology itself (Krotz 1987).

The research was carried out within an institutional framework, or rather, it is a project registered in the programma of research topics at the Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas, of the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. This enabled the project to receive financial assistance from the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, through the Programa Cultural de las Fronteras during 1992 and the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología throughout 1993.

It is true that this work displays subjectivity, particularly with respect to the selection of the communities to be studied and the informants, and in other unforeseen areas. Although I do not believe that this would be the only study to present these characteristics, I feel it is necessary to point out at least some of these aspects. The level of subjectivity in this project does not

invalidate the analysis of the patronal fiestas in Yucatán, following Devereux (1977) I argue that this situation is one of the necessary antecedents for the interpretation of any anthropological text and perhaps for any other type of work that, claiming to be of a scientific nature, does not draw attention at least to the problem of partial identification between the researcher and his object of study.

This thesis also belongs to the now mature anthropological tradition of the use of the comparative method. It is a comparative study of four patronal fiestas in Yucatán. Several factors conditioned the selection of these communities, among these, for example, the size of the community, the patronal fiesta itself and the socioeconomical factors involved. One other key factor employed was the possibility of establishing contacts with important informants who could facilitate the field work and enable a more complete and accurate set of ethnographic notes to be compiled. Taking these criteria into account, the following communities were selected: Mérida, Yucatán's state capital; Hunucma and Tetiz, both within the Henequen Zone, in the northwest of the State of Yucatán; and Sisal, a fishing port. It is therefore the intention to contrast patronal fiestas located in diverse social and economic contexts within a single political entity.

Mérida is not only the capital of the state of Yucatán but also the largest city in the Yucatan peninsula, apart

from being the host city to one of the most important and ancient of all the patronal fiestas in the state. The image venerated in the fiesta performs as one of the most important images, both for popular Catholicism and for its orthodox counterpart.

Hunucma and Tetiz are adjoining municipalities, located within a single socio-economic region and have shared social histories. The selection of these villages is due to two factors: the first of these is that Hunucma with a population of 17,495 is approximately five times larger than Tetiz; and the second and most important is that both villages celebrate the same image in their respective patronal fiestas, thus creating a unique and interesting situation, as the larger population is dependent symbolically, at least during the fiesta, on the smaller one. Finally, the port of Sisal was selected because, although it belongs to the same parish as Hunucma and Tetiz, it does not constitute a municipal unit and so is dependent on Hunucma not only with regard to political decisions but also with respect to the veneration of the image during the patronal fiesta, an image which is always maintained in the municipal center: Hunucma.

One further factor of importance for the selection of the communities must be mentioned here, and is concerned with the circulation of the images in the northwest of the State. Frequently, there are requests for some images to

visit different towns and villages in order to preside over the fiestas or accompany other images to reside at the fiestas. In addition to this is the peculiar fact that none of the fiestas considered in this study really correspond to the official village patron.

Although it could be said that this project might have been more beneficial had it contrasted fiestas at a greater organizational distance from each other, for example a comparison of fiestas from the east and from the west of the state, the decision was taken to work with these communities so as to be able to develop a model for such fiestas in the west of the state (possible only after studying a variety of fiestas), by which means comparisons with other regions of the state could be achieved later.

It is worth pointing out that in spite of the similarities between this study and that of Redfield (1941) with respect to the number of communities and the comparative nature of his research, there is no link maintained in this study with the three processes identified by Redfield as individualization, secularization and disorganization of the folk culture.

The communities selected cannot be defined by Aguirre Beltran's (1973) now outdated proposals as "refuge regions", nor in Wolf's terminology (1957) as "close corporate communities", in reference to their contact with the so called western or ladino world, as they are not communities

safely insulated from regional and national occurrences but are rather dynamic and active communities, like those described as "hot" by Balandier (1975).

The fieldwork took place over a period of five years between 1990-1994 in noncontinuous periods, during which time participation in all the fiestas that took place in the chosen communities was achieved. Due to the magnitude of the task undertaken, the aim was not to compile complete ethnographic notes of the communities, and in that sense the study does not fall within the concept of community studies in anthropology.

Instead, the fieldwork was based on an ethnographic analysis that focussed specifically on the patron saint fiestas, and where the comparative focus constituted the principal organizing factor in both the description and the analysis. Thus, a descriptive selection of the sociocultural events of community life is presented in the dissertation, in such a way as to demonstrate the links between these factors and the fiesta.

It is also important to indicate that, as in all research work and particularly in anthropological research, there is an evident imbalance with regard to the quantity and quality of the information collected during the periods of fieldwork. This is a result of objective and subjective elements. The Hunucma fiesta could only be studied on one occasion due to the suspension of the fiesta in 1991 and

1992. The more subjective factors include the preference given to one community, in this case Sisal, where it was possible to establish important contacts due to the openness of the fishermen towards people from other walks of life. The research work considers the fiestas themselves as an analytical unit, while the different social groupings such as the gremios and cargadores, are taken as forming the source unit.

The following techniques were employed to collect the ethnographical information: participant observation; direct observation and free interviews. However, it is important to point out that in the course of the fieldwork some technology was used that is not in common usage, in particular the use of a video camera and a standard camera. Thus, apart from this dissertation the fieldwork has led also to the making of a video entitled "De fiesta en fiesta" and a photo exhibition. The production of the film led to the inclusion of three other members in the research team, as well as the principal researcher.

The formation of the study team was crucial in order to make a visual presentation of the ethnographic panorama of the fiestas at Sisal, Tetiz, Hunucma and Mérida (Cathedral). Edward Montañez and Waldemaro Concha initiated me into the photographic world and its language and together we worked through the trials and tribulations of the production and edition of the video program.



The formation of a working group also helped to distribute the activities during the filming and later in the editing.

For the filming we distributed the work in the following way: one person took charge of the video camera, another of the still camera and a third acted as director for the shots, and as interviewer, so that the most important events were satisfactorily filmed and recorded.

With regard to the editing, this benefitted from the continual comments made by the group and also by an external advisor A. Burns. In spite of the fact that our equipment was initially limited and our camera was not of a high quality, we succeeded in maintaining an even quality throughout the film, sufficient for the different audiences to appreciate and learn about the four fiestas we worked on.

Our attention during the filming and editing was drawn not only to the highpoints of the procedure, but also to the more marginal aspects and so the aim was to film the relevant and public aspects of the fiestas, for their emotiveness and crowd interest, as well as those activities that are not particularly interesting as crowd pullers nor for the participation of social actors.

Thus, the film focused on the details of the obviously public events such as processions and pilgrimages among others; but it also included other details that referred to transcendental aspects of the life of the fiesta and

particularly the gremios, although these obviously lacked a large public expression.

Here I am referring in particular to the preparation of food and to the changes in the organizing committees, and in particular this last aspect as it occurs at a different time to the fiesta.<sup>3</sup>

In this way, interviews were recorded at other times than during the fiesta itself, and so the main actors were able to present themselves both within the fiesta context and without, and were also able to indicate the most important factors in the fiestas and in particular of the gremios.

General overviews of the villages were also included in the filming and in the still photos, with the aim of providing the social context and background for the study and to place the fiesta in its own atmosphere. By these means we feel that a broad ethnographic panorama of the fiestas of Sisal, Tetiz, Hunucma and Mérida was achieved, succeeding also in making a visual contrast in video and still photos of these fiestas. From all the experience gained from the fieldwork, and above all from fieldwork visually orientated in this way, it is worth drawing

---

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed description of the principal characteristics of Yucatan's fiestas see pages 92-95. See also Fernández (1988 and 1990) and Fernández and Quintal (1992).

attention to the attitudes displayed by the people filmed with regard to the cameras (both video and still).

First, it must be pointed out that the communities in the study can in no way be considered isolated from the mass media, and so they were familiar with both methods of filming (video and still cameras). Indeed, in three of the four communities cable television is available and in some cases, particularly in the case of the city of Mérida, the many of the participants in the fiesta had their own video cameras or hired a photographer to record the fiesta.

It can be said of the fiestas in the northwest of Yucatán that there is a gradual inclusion of video and still cameras in the general festive ambience of the fiestas, together with the presence of professional photographers, tourists and visual anthropologists.

This report concurs with Freundenthal (1988) when he suggests that the technology necessary for the application of visual anthropological methods are not disruptive to the social processes being studied. I found that visual techniques are equally as disruptive as the presence of strangers in general, at least from the experience gathered in this fieldwork.

The cameras and in particular the video camera did attract the attention of many people. Children were those who were in general most drawn to the mechanisms of the cameras, and on such occasions I allowed the children to

look through the viewfinder and so to experience and participate in the practice of filming.

It must be added here that if at first the video camera drew the attention of both children and adults, its ease of handling and silence enabled it to merge into the background and after a few moments it was forgotten by all, and the anthropologist could continue to register the processes he was concerned with.

At the same time as the recording of the fiesta was carried out, I also elaborated my field note book, and so it was necessary to work out a schedule so as to achieve the fundamental interviews necessary for the reconstruction of the internal organization and way of life of the gremios and the fiestas. First of all we went, during the days of the fiesta, to the places where the gremios set off towards the church, which we duly filmed. Then, the next step was to show the members of the gremio the photographs and arrange a meeting to be able to record interviews.

With the aim of making our objectives clearer to the gremio members, we projected a few segments of the activities that we had filmed showing the part the gremio members had played during their day in the fiesta, before each of the five interviews that we filmed took place. This attracted the attention, in some cases, of a large public curious to see themselves and their fellow villagers on the television.

On some occasions we filmed the villagers while they watched the original video film so as to record their reactions as they discovered themselves and their friends, amidst great laughter, and this identification game became the principal attraction during the showings.

For the gremio members in Tetiz, the photographs that they received from us provided them with a means to explain our presence at the event. When we gave them the photographs they said to us that our presence there and the photographs fulfilled a promise to the Virgin and was therefore a perfectly normal procedure, in terms of the relationship between themselves and the Virgin. This also enabled me to confirm the general belief of the Yucatecan communities that what is related in some way with the gremio also shares this link with the Church, in contrast to what belongs to, or is in the hands, of the people.

The presence of the video camera during an important conflict in January 1992 in Tetiz and Hunucma, revealed other possibilities for the use of the video camera. On the occasion of the petition of the image of the Virgin of Tetiz to preside over the fiesta of Hunucma, and the consequent refusal, part of the group responsible for the image and other sectors of the population that kept it asked me to film the people responsible for refusing permission for the Virgin to leave, so that by this means there would be a record of their role in these events. Due to the delicate

nature of the situation and for reasons of professional ethics I declined to do this, mentioning my impartiality with regard to the problem. This experience demonstrated the potential use of the camera by some of the people in Hunucma and Tetiz.

It was particularly interesting to remark a comparison observed by the Tetiz gremio members themselves, with regard to the presence (or not) of the image of the Virgin in each of the sequences of film that corresponded to each of the gremios. They pointed out that in their particular sequence the image of the honored Virgin did not appear whereas in others it did. While this did not cause great indignation among the gremios, it certainly made us reflect on the need to include the image of the Virgin in the video film in such a way as to avoid associating it particularly with one or other gremio, and to aim at projecting the image as belonging to the community as a whole.

Some of the other attitudes worthy of interest occurred during the interviews in Sisal. In this port we gave a collective showing and interview, in which we benefitted from the participation of the members of two different gremios, who were able to recognize the organizational deficiencies of both gremios, and one in particular, and finally agreed that in the following fiesta they would see that changes were implemented. The interest of the outsiders in the fiesta (the presence of cameras, and after the fiesta

the showing of the photos and the video films) never exceeded the interest that of the villagers themselves. The familiarity enjoyed at present by the visual media in these communities and the importance given to the visual conservation of the fiesta was confirmed for us by the numerous requests for copies of video film and photographs, requests made both by the gremio members and by spectators.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that while we did not experience insuperable problems with regard to the filming and taking of shots during the fiestas, the fear and suspicions of the gremio members that we were professional photographers who would then charge for our labors, was noticeable. Fortunately we were able to placate these fears early on and explain that our presence and work in the communities was not of this type.

#### Research Objectives

This dissertation intends to contribute to the analysis of the Yucatecan patronal fiestas through the construction of a model of patronal fiesta in the northwest of the State of Yucatán.

The initial proposal followed the perspective Smith (1977) had developed to study patronal fiestas in Guatemala, that is, to link the main characteristics of the patronal fiestas to the socioeconomic conditions of the places he was working in. However, the research process generated other questions related to the same topic. These new questions

included the following aspects: 1) production, circulation and consumption of cultural elements and practices within the context of patronal fiestas and 2) the relations between the patronal fiestas and the construction of different social identities.

A deeper historical perspective of the patronal fiestas was achieved thanks to the information given by Genny Negroe who is being doing an important archive research at the Church Archives.

#### The Contents of the Dissertation

This dissertation comprises four chapters plus one final reflection which attempts to synthesize the statements presented throughout the text. Chapter 2 is a general description of the places where the patronal fiestas studies take place. An attempt is made to give an idea about the socioeconomic and sociocultural conditions of those communities.

The main concepts and the theoretical perspective adopted are presented in Chapter 3. The intention is to outline the theoretical approach used in the subsequent analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the result of the historical research carried out in order to reconstruct the phenomenon fiesta in the context of Yucatán. It also brings a general approach to the historical characteristics of the fiestas studied here.



In chapter 5, I analyze the main features of contemporary patronal fiestas in Mérida, Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal. There is particular reference to the questions of the associations which participate in a fiesta and of the control of the Church over them.

Finally, in Chapter 6 identity and the socioeconomic conditions which permit, among other things, the realization of a patronal fiesta.

The dissertation also contains an Appendix that, although it does not deal with the fiesta itself, points out the implications of certain political conflicts over the celebration of a fiesta.

## CHAPTER 2

### A SOCIOECONOMICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### An Overview of Yucatán

Historically speaking, Yucatán has always been thought of in relation to the production of henequen, or sisal. Henequen production initiated an economic boom in the State towards the end of the last century and it sustained a large part of the population both in the city and in the countryside for most of the present century.

Anthropologists have generally been interested in Yucatán in the context of Mesoamerica and have therefore emphasized the importance of maize and the contemporary Maya culture as a means of identifying the state of Yucatán and the peninsula in general. However, worldwide, Yucatán is remembered for the Ancient Maya, who built and inhabited the pre-hispanic cities that still can be seen today.

Focusing on maize or henequen alone can not accurately explain the economic and cultural realities of present-day Yucatán and thus it is necessary to present a brief outline of what the State is like today.

The State of Yucatán is located in the southeast of México, occupying the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula, with a land area of 38.402 square kilometers

(2.2% of the total area of México). Along the State's boundaries are to the east and southeast, the State of Quintana Roo; to the west and southwest, the State of Campeche; and to the north, the Gulf of Mexico. Yucatán has 378 kilometers of coastline making up 3.8% of the total Mexican coastline (Yucatán. Monografía Estatal 1986).

The Yucatan peninsula (and the State of Yucatán) is a limestone plateau where mechanized agriculture cannot develop due to the shallow, chalky top soil. The average annual temperature is 26.2 degrees centigrade; the hottest month is May and the coldest, January. With a very small temperature variation, Yucatán does not have what would commonly be called winter, but the months fall into two distinct seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. The rainy season lasts from approximately May to October, and the average annual rainfall in this period is 900 millimeters (Yucatán. Monografía Estatal 1986). Despite the fact that the rainy season ends in October, the months from November to March produce a special climatic effect known locally as the "north" season. During this period, northerly winds bring some rain and strong wind for periods of three or four days at a time, and a general cooling of the temperature.

Yucatán has a varied vegetation ranging from tropical jungle to mangroves, and including brushland and thickets, and cactus and palm savanna. There is an equally varied

local fauna living in close harmony with the regional ecosystems.

Generally speaking, the Yucatecan soil is poor due to the nature of the geological substrata, but despite this the Ancient Maya developed agricultural techniques which enabled their people to survive until today. Within this context diverse agricultural practices have developed in the contemporary period together with the work of artisans, a small industrial sector and an important services sector, all of which contribute to the local economy.

The total population of the State of Yucatán is 1,362,940 (673,892 men; 689,048 women), distributed unevenly across the territory, with the state capital, Mérida, accounting for 523,422 inhabitants (38.4% of the total state population) (XI Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1990).

The socio-economic profile of the State of Yucatán consists of six regions or zones: 1. Coastal Region, 2. Henequen Growing Region or Henequen Zone, 3. Metropolitan Region, 4. Cattle Raising Region, 5. Maize Growing Region also known as the Traditional Zone and 6. Horticultural and Fruit Growing Region (see figure 1). The limits of these zones do not necessarily coincide with the municipal boundaries and so in some cases, particularly on the coast, these are crossed by the socioeconomic regional divisions.

The population distribution according to the three productive sectors is as follows: in the primary sector,

110, 057 inhabitants; in the secondary sector, 99, 896 inhabitants; in the third sector, 189,334 inhabitants (XI Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1990).

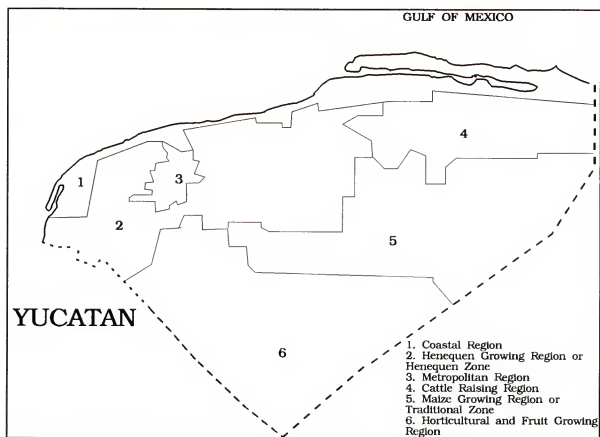


Figure 1--Socioeconomic Regions of the State of Yucatán.

Yucatán has 106 municipios, administered by municipal presidents (town mayors) who reside in the principal town of the area. The smaller towns and villages within the municipio are administered by a representative of the mayor, called superintendent (comisario municipal).

The ethnic and linguistic composition of the State seems, at first sight, to be fairly simple. On the one hand, there is the Maya speaking population (monolingual) which

accounts for approximately 40,813 inhabitants, and represents 2.99% of the total state population; and on the other hand, the bilingual Maya-Spanish population comprising 475,962 inhabitants (34.92%). Also, there is a Spanish monolingual speaking population comprising the rest of the total state population (62.09%) (XI Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1990).

According to the same source, there are few inhabitants who speak other indigenous languages and these have not formed into sizeable social groups.

The panorama observed in Yucatán is remarkably different from that in other parts of México, such as Oaxaca or Chiapas where the contrasts between linguistic and cultural traditions involve more than three ethnic groups within a single state.

Despite the apparent simplicity of the Yucatecan picture, the situation does indeed present problems of ethnic characterization to the extent that the linguistic groups, and particularly the monolingual Maya inhabitants, do not represent an internal homogenization that manifests a single form of ethnic identity. On the contrary, the subtleties of ethnic identity reveal a close relationship both to the characteristics of the historical process and to the contemporary situation in which the yucatecan communities lived in the past and live today. Thus, it is not the same to be a Maya from the Coastal Region as it is

to be a Maya from the Henequen Growing Region or from the Cattle Raising Region. At the same time, the definition of categories within the classification of white/mestizo,<sup>1</sup> is extremely difficult to determine (for greater exploration of this topic see Barabas 1979; Negroe 1990 and Hervik 1992).

### Mérida, the Peninsula's Central Point

It can be said without a doubt that Mérida is the most important city in the Peninsula of Yucatan, both in terms of its population and the services that it offers. The presentation here of a historic and contemporary history of Mérida would take considerable time and space not relevant to this work; however, it is necessary to mention some characteristics that the city has exhibited over a long period of time, with the aim of painting a general panorama of the context in which the fiesta of Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas takes place.

The motives for the founding of new cities in New Spain followed very diverse considerations. Cities were founded with specific functions such as ports, garrisons, mining centers, residential zones for the colonist, or as

---

<sup>1</sup> The term mestizo is employed in Yucatán to refer to the Maya population that occupies the territory, while the term indio refers pejoratively to the same population and is also used generally to refer to behavior that reflects a lack of a refined (read "western") culture, as for example as shown with good table manners.

The contrasting group, the white group, in reality does not receive this name, and the mestizo population refers to them as Dzul.

administrative capitals. Mérida was conceived of, and later founded on, the basis of criteria relating to administrative efficiency and this became the reason for its construction. This city, which was designated the capital of the province of Yucatán, was founded on the 6th of January 1542 by Francisco de Montejo El Mozo, on the ruins of the well populated Maya city of T-ho, in the Maya Province of Chakan.<sup>2</sup>

The representatives of the central political power resided here, as well as the Bishop and his auxiliary body and the royal functionaries, whose political, religious or economic decisions concerned or affected the whole province (Fernández Tejedo 1990:61).

Many of the New World cities displayed a common model of construction based on the Roman grid-system plan. Mérida was no exception and so the public buildings, such as the Cathedral, the Royal Houses, the City Hall (Cabildo) and the Conqueror's house, were built up around the central city square. Immediately surrounding these, came the residences of the wealthiest Spaniards and farther out, the poorer sectors. Following a rigid practice of residential separation between Spaniards, Indians, Negroes and other castes, and according to the rate of growth of the cities, the districts on the outskirts of the city were often

---

<sup>2</sup> Many authors have written on the foundation of the city of Mérida, among them are: Chamberlain (1982), López Cogolludo (1957), Tommasi (1951) and Molina Solís (1988).



outside the city limits. Many of these municipios, as in the case of Mérida, even had their own parishes reproducing on a small scale the center of the city itself.

According to Tommasi, Francisco de Montejo El Mozo also decided which of the suburbs or districts were to be occupied by local Maya families, with names such as Santiago, Santa Catarina, San Sebastián, San Cristóbal and Santa Lucía (Tommasi 1951:117).

Santa Ana, situated outside the city, was thought of as a village until the seventeenth century when it was incorporated into the city as an Indian suburb. San Cristóbal was originally the home of Nahua indians who had accompanied Montejo in the final stages of the conquest. In Santa Lucía and Santiago the Negro and part Negro population lived.

During the colonial period the expansion and consolidation of Mérida as the political and economic center, responsible for the events of the peninsula was achieved. After Independence the development and growth of the city accelerated, stimulated by an important reactivation of the economy, reaching a peak at the middle of the nineteenth century with the creation and exploitation of the henequen industry.

The expansion of the henequen industry was fundamental in the formation and consolidation of Mérida's society at the turn of the century. Shielded by the porfiriato, the

henequen industry experienced its most prosperous period, which in turn led to the formation of a particular social structure in the city of Mérida and in the subsequent patterns of consumption.

The construction of the railways servicing the city and the surrounding Henequen Growing Region, the creation of banking societies, the formation of artisan's workshops and the concentration of services and means of communication, launched Mérida onto the road to development and to the place it now occupies as regional capital of the Peninsula of Yucatan (Vázquez 1990 and Fuentes 1991).

It is also interesting to note that during that same period (the rise of the henequen industry) European influences imposed specific consumer models among Mérida's hacienda owners and merchants, especially with regard to the home and forms of dress.

In the former case, one only need observe the vast mansions built in the avenue Paseo Montejo, to the north of the city, and in the second case, consult the local newspapers of the period which indicate the European tastes of this aristocratic society.

The relative isolation of Mérida and Yucatán in relation to the rest of the country, on the other hand, and the wealth generated by the henequen industry, contributed to the formation of a complex social structure that included a large artisanal component, which, following its appearance

at the beginning of the last century, consolidated in the second half of that century.

The sociospatial organization of the city of Mérida, or in Hansen's terms (Hansen 1934 and Hansen and Bastarrachea 1984), the ecology of the city of Mérida maintained the colonial model until approximately the second half of the last century; that is, a model that worked on the principal of a central area with different districts formed around it, as existed in the time of Francisco de Montejo El Mozo. The surrounding the districts reproduced in the same way, what happened in the city as a whole.

The way of life in the districts created a particular type of organization, common also to other parts of Mesoamerica, which included both its own political authorities and also its own religious life. In terms of patronal fiestas, each held its own, many of which are maintained today.

The decline of the henequen industry during the second half of the present century has not prevented the city from continuing to develop so as to consolidate itself as

the most complete city in the region, as far as infrastructure for transport and communications are concerned; railways, an international airport, commercial port with a depth of 30 kilometers and a wide telecommunications coverage.

It is the principal consumer center and the center of distribution of goods and services, and it has the most complete storage installations in the peninsula. The transformation and distribution of primary resources are concentrated in the city, as are also the industrial base, middle and higher educational institutions, private and public specialized hospitals,

sports and cultural infrastructure, and the principal commercial activity (Plan de Desarrollo Urbano de la Ciudad de Mérida, quoted by Fuentes 1991:6. Free translation from the Spanish).

The concentration of services and jobs in general, has made Mérida, together with Cancún in the neighboring state of Quintana Roo, one of the principal attractions for the rural population, who migrate to the city in the face of the precarious conditions for agricultural production and services in the rural areas. Migration to the city of Mérida is principally from the Henequen Growing Region (see figure 1) which has been buried in a deep crisis for several decades, inducing its inhabitants to go to the city daily and by diverse means in search of employment that will enable them and their families to subsist.

At the present moment the city has a population of 523,422 inhabitants, which makes it the most populated city of the peninsula, constituting 38.40% of the total state population (XI Censo de Población y Vivienda 1990). The city of Mérida, principal town of the municipio of the same name, is one of the approximately 90 towns and villages that comprise the aforementioned territory. Mérida is situated in the northwest of the peninsula in Yucatán State, in the so-called Metropolitan Region, a name which refers, naturally, to the fact that in practical terms it is the most urbanized area of the State (see figure 1). The economically active population is 177, 505 people, whereas the employed

population totals 174, 268 inhabitants (XI Censo de Población y Vivienda 1990). The city of Mérida, like many cities within the capitalist economic system, concentrates its employed population in the tertiary sector (121, 374 people, representing approximately 70% of the total employed population), the secondary sector totals 46, 996 inhabitants, that is 27% of the employed population; whereas the sector representing the lowest number of employees is the primary sector, with only 2,502 people, or, approximately 1.5% of the employed population (XI Censo de Población y Vivienda 1990).

Mérida is the seat of both the municipal and the state governments, and is the location of the different regional offices and their various state ministries.

The sociospatial distribution of the city reveals important contrasts that relate to the complex socioeconomic structure of the city today and are very different than those observed in the last century: the ecology of the city in the twentieth century has changed drastically. The most urbanized part of the city is the northern sector, where the residents for the most part enjoy full services and facilities. In this sector the residents with the highest earnings live and the principal shopping malls and the most important of the city's services are concentrated. The aim is, of course that the inhabitants of this zone, those with the most buying power, have all that they might need or

desire immediately at hand. In the northwest and northeast of the city are the professional sectors, concentrated in large suburbs, well equipped and with some large and other smaller shopping malls, grocery stores and supermarkets.

The starkest contrast to these areas is to be found in the south of the city where there is a low level of urbanization, partly due to the spontaneous settlements of migrants with little or no economic or political power who have been unable to incorporate themselves into the municipal services network. There is very little infrastructure here, and in some areas none at all.

Employees of the tertiary sector, bureaucrats and small traders are based largely in the east, west and south of the city, in an area relatively close to the city center, in the old districts of the city, such as, La Mejorada, Santiago and San Sebastián. In the areas of these suburbs most distant from the center city, a different type of suburb has grown up bringing together people from diverse occupational sectors. In spite of Mérida's rapid urbanization, which since the last decade of the 60's has rapidly changed the face of the city, the traditional organization that distinguished between the center and the outskirts has remained in many of the so-called old districts of the city. This organization is the patronal fiesta. Although many of the limits between the center and outer districts have been worn away, many of the former districts still maintain their

patronal fiestas. Of particular importance are those celebrated in Santiago.

In the same way it can be said that the celebration of the fiesta of Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas in the Cathedral in the "center" of the city also maintains these traditional divisions, dating from the colonial period.

The center of the city of Mérida is characterized by a vibrant commercial activity as it concentrates the majority of businesses of different types, as well as housing the public and government offices (Mérida is the seat of the state government, the governor and the local Congress and town administration).

The central district of the city is also the tourist center as it is here that the principal historic colonial buildings can be found. As a result, there are many tourist services concentrated in the zone, such as hotels, restaurants and tourist agencies, among others. Residential housing has gradually been replaced by commercial and industry service, uses of space in this zone.

It is also important to mention that in the course of the expansion of the city of Mérida, some towns such as Chuburna (to the north of the city) and San José Tzal (to the south) have been incorporated into the city as suburbs. In these places, and in the migrant settlements in the south of the city, the Maya population still conserves some specific traits that make it possible to distinguish them as

a particular social sector in contrast to other groups that do not manifest a specific ethnic background

As in the old districts of the city, in these population centers the patronal fiestas are maintained and continue to organize a large part of the popular religious expressions of the former inhabitants.

In spite of the fact that the city of Mérida is the most important urban center in the State it has not ceased to display a strong Maya presence, and according to data in the 1990 census, the number of Maya speaking people (but not necessarily monolingual) in the city population was 74,253, or 14.18% of the population. However, one must take into account here the number of migrants who come daily to Mérida in search of employment and ensure that the Maya language is maintained as a form of communication in certain social spaces of the city, such as the interactions between market salesman in the city market.

Thus, Mérida today enjoys a development characterized by a rapid growth in different areas, but which also conserves intact important social, and in many senses, cultural, divisions.

#### Hunucma and Tetiz: the Rural Zones

#### The Regional Context

Approximately 450 years ago, the territories of Hunucma and Tetiz belonged to the Maya province of Ah Canul. During the colonial period the inhabitants of both villages were



subjects of the encomienda (grant of Indians for tribute), whose owners were distinguished members of colonial society.

The following data has been obtained in relation to the encomienda owners of Hunucma: in 1571 Doña Beatriz de Montejo, married to Don Francisco de Montejo, the Nephew. On the death of her husband she married don Diego de Santillán, who was at that time Governor of the Province.

Later in 1585, a different governor, Don Martín de Palomar was owner of the territory and during the second half of the seventeenth century Hunucma was the encomienda of Don Diego García de Montalvo and Doña Angela Menéndez (García Bernal 1978:490).

In Tetiz, encomiendas were established belonging successively to: Sebastián Vázquez de Aranda, Alonso de Rojas in 1579, Joaquín Gómez 1607, Antonio Gómez Pacheco 1647, Francisco Tello de Aguilar 1656 and Don Pablo de Aguilar 1688. In the second half of the seventeenth century, to: Francisco y Ortiz de Quiroz in 1549 (all of Tetiz), Baltazar de Quiroz 1607, Juan Quiroz Alvarado 1607, Gerónimo López de Bobadilla 1636, Gerónimo de Bobadilla, Marcos Cervera (minor) 1654, and Don Alonso Hernández de Cervera (García Bernal 1978).

The socioeconomic evolution of Hunucma and Tetiz was not significantly different to that of other settlements in the same region, apart from being situated along the road from Sisal to Mérida, which meant that much merchandise and

many merchants had to pass through the town. At the same time as the establishment of the encomiendas, rural fincas began to develop dedicated to raising cattle and horses. When needed and when profits permitted, maize began to be incorporated into the fincas (Patch 1976:41-61). Later, once the rebels responsible for the Caste War had been placated, the whole of the northwest zone of the Peninsula was dedicated to the monocrop cultivation of henequen, stimulated by the needs of the international market. The population was mainly composed of Maya campesinos with a minority of whites and other castes.

In the second half of the last century, due to the good price of the fiber known in the international markets as sisal, the zone today called "the Henequen Zone" began to consolidate and prosper. Situated in the northwest of the State, this territory has had a marked dependency on the central actor of the Province, Mérida, since the conquest.

From the time of the development of henequen industry in Yucatán, Hunucma and Tetiz have been involved in its production and important haciendas have occupied the area, taking in not only what today is included in the municipios but also part of the municipios of Samahil and Ucu, which in the last century formed part of Hunucma.

Its proximity to Mérida, with its greater concentration of Europeans and the introduction of production techniques quite different to the ones in existence, established

clearly defined patterns of economic and cultural development, from the earliest days of the colonial period.

The Mayas living in the communities close to Mérida participated actively in the socioeconomic changes taking place during the colonial period.

Thus, it was they who with their labor aided the development of the estancias, and later on the classic haciendas, and at the beginning of the century it was they too, who permitted the growth of the city of Mérida and the enrichment of its oligarchy by the production of the henequen plantations.

In this sense, the way of life of the Mayas in this zone was strongly linked to that of their Spanish and Creole masters since the days of the conquest and colonization, and later, dependent on the europeanized Yucatecan oligarchy. This proximity to the culture of the white Europeans led to the gradual formation of the mestizo, a different Maya identity (Bartolomé 1988).

The varied and systematic expropriation of lands and means of production, forced the Mayas from the henequen plantations to search for specific strategies that would enable them to interact with to the white population.

The relatively early use of Spanish for formal, public communication, the adoption of European dress and the changing of surnames, the refusal to speak Mayan language in certain social contexts, all formed an integral part of this

conflict in which the Mayas expressed a certain recognition of Spanish domination.

In spite of the violent processes of appropriation and cultural, political and economic control forced upon the population in the Henequen Zone, I do not believe that these are the cause of the loss of "Indianness" proposed by Pintado (1982) and I concur with Bartolomé when he says that the campesinos mayas mestizos henequeneros maintain a double identity in terms of their occupational aggregation and their ethnic conscience, but despite this they remain among the groups within Yucatecan society with the lowest subjective and objective status (Bartolomé 1988:302), and thus on numerous occasions display their ethnic identity in negative terms.

Despite the fact that the economic and social control exercised by religion is easily observed, this does not prevent the expression of "Indianness."

The 1990 census reveals that in the Henequen Zone, corresponding to the municipal areas of Hunucma, Tetiz, Kinchil and Celestún the contingent Maya speaking component of each of the municipios was, respectively, 40%, 67%, 12% and 67%.

If we add to these figures the always present internal process of a negative ethnic identity that does not recognize that the native language is spoken in the region, we would find that the figures rise considerably.

What is important to mention, however, is that the monolingual Maya population is relatively small in relation

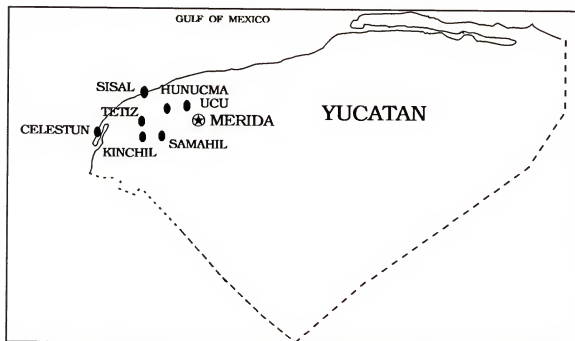


Figure 2--Location of the Communities and their Hinterland.

to the bilingual population. It is within this strategic framework of identities that the forms of fiestas to be described later, arise.

The actual Henequen Zone or Henequen Growing Region where both the municipal areas are situated comprises 62 of the 106 municipal areas of the State of Yucatán. Since the collapse of henequen production, the region has been subjected to endless government plans designed to offer agricultural alternatives to the population. As a result of the last program of development for this region, in 1984 the population dependent on the production of henequen was reduced from 30% in 1984 to 16% in 1991 (Programa de

Desarrollo Regional de la Zona Henequenera de Yucatán, 1992-1994).

It is within this context that the economic, social and cultural life of Hunucma and Tetiz take place.

Hunucma. The town of Hunucma is the principal town of the municipio, of the same name, and is also the seat of the municipal authorities. Hunucma is in the northwest of Yucatán, 29 Km. from Mérida (see figure 2).

The municipio includes within its boundaries the following communities: Hunucma (the cabecera municipal or principal town) Hunkanab, San Antonio Chel, Sisal and Texan Palomeque.

To the north, the municipio borders on the Gulf of Mexico, to the south, with Tetiz and Samahil, to the east with Progreso, Ucu and Uman, and has a total area of 599.1 square kilometers (Programa de Desarrollo Regional de la Zona Henequenera de Yucatán, 1992-1994). The etymology of Hunucma gives several possible meanings, among which are the following: many waters; the water of the marsh; the water of the resonant marsh; and the water that rings with the song of the dove (Conversation with Salvador Rodríguez).

The composition of the population in the cabecera municipal, Hunucma is the following: 17, 495 inhabitants, an employed population of 4,795 with a fairly even sectorial distribution: 1,591 (33%) people employed in the primary sector; 1,384 (29%) in the secondary sector, and 1,673 (35%)

in the tertiary sector (XI Censo general de Población y Vivienda 1990). It is important to mention that the existence of a certain degree of activity in the tertiary sector has made Hunucma the most important center of the region as it satisfies the demands for services of the smaller communities and also of some of the neighboring municipios, such as Tetiz and Kinchil.

As part of the Henequen Growing Region of the State, Hunucma has been deeply affected by the weakening and more-or-less vanishing of henequen production as a viable entity in the State. As part of the process of transformation of the Yucatecan agriculture, the Program for Regional Development of the Henequen Zone, 1992-1994 (Programa de Desarrollo Regional de la Zona Henequenera, 1992-1994) was created in 1992, with the aim of creating the conditions necessary for the development of a sustained economy without the government subsidy that had sustained the production of henequen for so many decades.

Among other effects that accompanied with the launching of the Program, a large part of the ejidal population was affected due to the retirement or forced redundancy of many of the ejidatarios and the withdrawal of subsidies.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence, this situation brought an almost total end to production and processing of henequen in the municipio,

---

<sup>3</sup> Ejidal and ejidatario derives from the word Ejido, a cooperative land owning unit.

forcing the young people move to other occupations, mainly in the tertiary sector.

While henequen production has not been totally abandoned, the two defibration plants, in Santa Cruz and San Miguel Chac, which are now administered by ejidatarios and without subsidies, have serious operation problems due the mainly to the shortage and poor quality of the henequen.

The young people of Hunucma no longer view the production of henequen as a viable alternative for employment, and thus there is a constant drop in the number of people involved in this activity.

Notwithstanding, the loss of henequen production has not meant a suspension of other agricultural practices. The campesinos continue to work the milpa, although the volume of production is not significant, as the maize crop is destined fundamentally for the subsistence or partial subsistence of he families involved.

Milpa production is also important as it represents a cultural continuity for the Maya group, which is still expressed in ceremonies such as Chaa Chac, the ceremony celebrated to bring good rainfall to the community.

Among the agricultural alternatives open to the population of Hunucma is the production of fruit, and in particular, citrus fruits. The cultivation of oranges, lemons and tangerines in particular have received attractive financial support from the government, especially in



infrastructure. The orange crops have been so good in the last few years that the producers are considering the possibilities of installing a juicing plant. Hunucma is also prominent in the west of Yucatán as a producer of mango and anona, among other fruits, as well as in the cultivation of fresh greens such as the, marrows, and tomatoes.

Honey production is also a possible alternative today, although there are still only a few families working in this area.

Poultry and pig production and cattle rearing are also economic activities in Hunucma and the poultry industry is a large employer.

A different source of employment practiced for some time is artisan and craft work, which helps to increase or at least maintain the basic family income (Tapia 1984 and Villanueva 1984).

The craftwork made in Hunucma include decorations made from coconut shells, and more recently a workshop was set up in the village dedicated to painting diverse clay and ceramic objects as well as chairs and picture frames.

However, due to the arrival in the coastal area of a disease affecting the coconut palms, called "Lethal Yellowing" many of the palms have died and as a result one of the primary resources for the craftworkers as decreased. The artisan workers also face the difficult problem of the commercialization of their product.

There are also self-employed workers who offer a variety of different services such as iron work, carpentry, plumbing and electricity.

Of the diverse alternatives to agricultural work in Hunucma it is important to indicate the part played by fishing in the municipality, where much of the population has been able to fulfill its needs: more than half the fishermen of the port of Sisal are from Hunucma. Fraga (1993) has shown that approximately 800 inhabitants of the town of Hunucma go daily to fish at Sisal (see figure 2). They are mostly young people who do not want to become involved in agriculture due to the poor incomes generated.

The daily migration in which they become involved allows them, on the one hand, to improve their income possibilities, and on the other, to continue living in the town where they not only have sentimental bonds and the daily routine of their family life, but also enables them to continue to benefit from the services available in the cabecera municipal that are not available in Sisal.

It is also important to draw attention to the fact that Hunucma's socioeconomic structure is fairly broad and accommodating, as can be seen in the distribution of the employed population in the different economic sectors.

Among the industries that dominate in Hunucma one must mention shoe manufacturing which has been an important factor for the population and has distinguished the

municipio in the region, although this industry is now entering a depression. There are at present 18 workshops.

Finally, it must be said that the proximity to Mérida and the ease of transportation between the Capital and Hunucma, has contributed to the growth of the work market, generating a daily migration towards Mérida, with the aim of finding work in the tertiary sector or to obtain a professional education.

The tertiary sector is amply represented as Hunucma has a relatively important level of services available, such as general stores, chemists, hardware shops, markets and mechanics workshops.

Hunucma has an internal transport system as well as also being efficiently connected to the Capital by telephone and numerous passenger bus services.

There are, of course, drinking water and electricity services, as well as telephone, and cable television. Recently, a rubbish collection service was initiated and an incinerating plant set in operation.

There is schooling available from pre-school level to high school, and there are also health services at primary and secondary health care levels provide by the IMSS (Mexican Institute for Social Security) and the SSA (Department of Health and Social Security).

With regard to religion, more than 95% of the population is Catholic, but this has not prevented the

appearance of alternative religious groups, and especially diverse Protestant denominations. However, their presence is far from being significant (XI Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1990).

This overview of the employment and services available in Hunucma explains why the inhabitants of Tetiz refer to Hunucma (the cabecera municipal) as the "principal town" by contrast to the surrounding communities.

The spatial distribution of the population in Hunucma in general terms follows the model that Mérida had until the beginning of this century, although there are some modifications. In principle, it follows the center-suburb distribution by means of a grid pattern, however, their limits are not clearly defined.

In the center, the main commercial and administrative activities are to be found. In the town square are the town hall, the Catholic church, the old market place, restaurants, shops, a bank, a pharmacy and the town museum, among other buildings.

The adjoining blocks to the main square continue to function as residential areas and the closeness to the center gives a position of privilege to those who live there.

As one moves further from the center, the housing conditions and the accompanying services (in particular the paving of streets) diminish in quality, and as a result the

price of the land is less and the people who inhabit it have low income.

The center-suburb pattern has suffered important modifications in the sociospatial organization of some specific areas of Yucatán due to the construction of the highway network in the State. This means that a main street is built and paved (which is in effect the highway, cutting through the village) which then gives rise to the formation of something similar to a North American "Main street", attracting diverse commercial activities all along the way.

Finally, it is important to remember that in spite of the fact that social and economic control of the region is in the hands of the mestizo population, in the sense of being mixed, and until now easily observed. This does not prevent some elements of their "Indianness" being hidden. The 1990 census revealed that in the municipal area of Hunucma, 40% of the population is Maya speaking, and therefore it is not possible to exclude this region, the Henequen Zone, from the Maya region of Yucatán, as has been done in the past by the National Indigenous Institute (Instituto Nacional Indigenista).

Tetiz. Tetiz is situated approximately 8 km. to the south of Hunucma, and also borders with the municipal areas of Kinchil to the south, Samahil to the east, and Celestún to the west, and has area of 180 square kilometers (Programa de Desarrollo Regional de la Zona Henequenera, 1992-1994).

Tetiz means "place where the sweet potato grows"

(Suárez 1979:161).

The following statistics are available for the cabecera municipal, also named Tetiz: total population, 2,887, employed population 773. Distribution of the employed population by sector: primary sector 532 (69%), secondary sector 95 (12%) and in the tertiary sector 121 (16%) (XI Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1990).

As can be seen in these statistics, there is an important concentration in the primary sector, which according to Baños (1993) is really an exception in the Henequen Zone today. Henequen production is still an important activity for the agricultural workers of this village who also out of necessity have to supplement their earnings with additional activities.

The employment prospects for the village have improved due to the establishment of large poultry farms. Although the farms are not situated in the cabecera municipal but in the community of Nohuayum, the majority of the labor force live in Tetiz and commute daily to the farms, where they labor for long hours a day.

As in Hunucma, the search for economic alternatives has led to the formation of citrus production units of the same type and with similar financial support from the State government as those in Hunucma. More recently, craft workshops have contributed to widen the ever decreasing

employment opportunities, and in particular these workshops employ the young people of Tetiz, thus reducing, at least in the short term, migration to the city of Mérida. The workshops produce decorated ceramics, picture frames, chairs and other products.

The employment situation in Tetiz has been described in the following terms by one of the local inhabitants: "Tetiz receives its income from three areas: henequen, poultry farming and the orange groves."

The milpa also exists in a way similar to that in Hunucma, as does fishing, although this is certainly on a smaller scale than in Hunucma.

In contrast to neighboring Hunucma, the production and service infrastructure in Tetiz is fairly poor, but it does have some shops, a market and a medical clinic belonging to the SSA (Department of Health and Social Security). There is pre-school, primary and secondary schooling available, also there is a telephone service, drinking water and electricity.

There is good communication with the Capital of the State and with other towns and municipios within the area by bus and collective taxi. However, many of the villagers' needs still have to be satisfied in Hunucma.

More than 95% of the population declare themselves Catholic, but there are also some alternative religious groups.

The settlement pattern is similar to that observed in Hunucma, and in spite of the less marked socioeconomic differentiation among the inhabitants of Tetiz, this is not reflected in the architecture.

With respect to Mayan language 67% of the population over five years old speak this Indian language, making this one of the preferred or dominant channels of communication.

Generally speaking, the differences registered between the towns of Tetiz and Hunucma are minimal in terms of the employment structure and the social and cultural conditions of the two towns; the differences are really in terms of size and not kind. The similarities found between the two towns are due among other causes to their participation within the same historical process, and to their neighboring sites.

#### Sisal: a Fishing Port

The port of Sisal is an ancient Maya township that in pre-colombian times belonged to the Maya Province of Ah Canul, which is today a district of the municipio of Hunucma (Lara 1959:1).

The port is linked to the cabecera municipal by a highway which runs approximately 24 kilometers, southward.

The name Sisal has been associated with several meanings, including are: "place where the cold is hard and penetrating"; "son or daughter of woman"; "the fresh shade of large spreading trees"; or, it has been associated with



the name of several plants, like the siempreviva (always alive) (Lara 1959:5).

During the colonial Period, the sea and its ports of access to the mainland played a fundamental role in the socioeconomic development of New Spanish peninsula society. For these reasons then, the Mayor of Yucatán, Don Diego de Quijada was concerned with developing the closest port to Mérida, Capital of the Province of Yucatán.

Thus, in 1566 he ordered the construction of the first highway from Mérida to Sisal and also the building of a causeway to save the marsh land and give access to the village.

When the Spanish conquest of Yucatán was consolidated around the middle of the XVI century, Sisal became an important port for communication and mercantile trade. However, the system of monopolies and privileges on which the colonial administration was based, had made Campeche, for a long time, the only operational port for the peninsula. It was therefore costly for the Capital and other cities in the interior of the Province to finance the establishment of a second port (Lara 1959:7-13).

Sisal was the only port during the colonial period to supply Mérida's demands and those of the surrounding villages, and thus the government and the merchants were concerned with maintaining the highway between Mérida and Sisal in working conditions. Governor Benito Pérez

Valdelomar, bringing before the Court the complaints of the inhabitants, provoked a Royal Mandate in February 1810 which permitted that for the duration of the war with France, ships coming from Havana could unload in Sisal.

A year later Sisal was declared a minor port and in 1840 received the title and status of Villa with its own emblem and coat of arms; in 1850 the port's first lighthouse was built and the Maritime Customs House was established there (Lara 1959:18).

With the creation of the state of Campeche in 1862 (O'Gorman 1979:139), Sisal remained the most important port of Yucatán, although its importance diminished from 1871 onwards when the port of Progreso was opened as a deep-water and trading port by Presidential decree of Benito Juárez.

Little by little Sisal dropped into oblivion for all commercial transactions, and the henequen fiber that became famous in all the world with the name of this port, ironically reached its export boom through the port of Progreso and not through Sisal itself.

Once Progreso displaced Sisal as the location of the Maritime Customs House for Yucatán, fishing ceased to be the principal economic activity of the port, as the villagers had to find different means of production with which to exploit the ecosystem.

The ejidos, and also the savanna and marshlands were used for small scale agricultural production (milpa). The

use of the savanna was not exclusively for milpa production as the petenes (groups of hardwood trees that grow in the marshes and savanna) were exploited for their wood and used for the construction of homes built according to the traditional Maya design.

According to one informer, hunting was also an important means of acquiring sufficient meat for the family's consumption, while fishing did not constitute an important activity for the townspeople. Most commonly, they hunted deer and small mammals, often using dogs for the capture and kill. Ducks were also hunted for local consumption.

The marshlands provided the opportunity to hunt alligators. This was carried out by the locals in conjunction with a merchant who held the permit necessary for trading the skin. This was then marketed through Progreso.

Today, Sisal is a small fishing village situated in the north of the peninsula of Yucatan. Whereas formerly it was an exporter of henequen, it is today a community of in-shore fishermen. The population is approximately 1,460 inhabitants, the majority of whom are employed in fishing (XI Censo de Población y Vivienda 1990). There are no economic alternatives to fishing, and only those people who have dedicated themselves to the commercialization of fishing have succeeded in escaping from the precarious

situation of fishing itself. The few traders and other people involved in the tertiary sector are also in this same situation, and while we cannot be certain that they have definitively abandoned fishing, it is to be assumed that this is the case. As such the distribution of the employed sector of the society is as follows: total employed, 454; total in the primary sector 318 (70%); in the secondary sector, 18 (4%) and in the tertiary sector 118 (26%) (XI Censo de Población y Vivienda 1990).

The number of people employed in the fishing sector of Sisal is 979 (those involved in the actual capture) and 2 people involved in industrial and related activities.

Fishing in Sisal, as in the rest of the coastal region of the State has been exploited for about forty years. In 1950, the State government only registered 520 fishermen involved in commercial fishing, while a few others practiced subsistence fishing from the smaller ports. There was not an adequate infrastructure in existence at that time to support fishing on a commercial scale and as a consequence its contribution to the State economy was insignificant (Murphy and Solís 1983:5-6).

Around the middle of the 50's, production in the fishing sector began to rise considerably and in the next two decades the federal government encouraged activity by the construction of the necessary infrastructure for development of the industry, especially by the construction

of the safe port at Yucalpeten, Progreso, presently the principal port in the State. In other smaller ports, small artificial harbors were built to protect the boats, freezing plants were set up and the network for distribution and marketing of the product was improved. At the same time, cooperatives were created, seen as the ideal mechanism through which to channel investments directly into the industry (Murphy and Solís 1983:5-7 and Fraga 1993:109-112).

Faced with the decline of the henequen industry, the government of Yucatán saw fishing as the perfect alternative for the displaced henequen campesinos, and thus the number of fishermen in the State has risen considerably (Fraga 1993).

The overview of the fishing activity in Sisal is in general terms as follows: there are currently two cooperatives operating in Sisal, "Koox Kai Ba" and "Punta Palmar." As cooperatives, they are able to market all the produce of the members including the protected species such as lobster and shrimp, although they are not permitted to specialize in the fishing of these crustaceans.<sup>4</sup>

Two Sociedades de Solidaridad Social (Societies for Social Solidarity) called "Chan Pool Ak" and "Chan Tunich," find themselves in a similar situation. Some years ago another society, the Sociedad de Producción Pesquera Rural

---

<sup>4</sup> The changes made to the fishing laws in 1993 permit that any fisherman may fish these previously restricted species.

called "Punta Piedra" was also in operation, but it has remained in existence only on the Fishing Ministry's registers. The fishermen who are not members of any of these organizations are termed "free" fishermen, and they generally work under agreement with one of the commercial intermediaries from whom they receive credits to carry out their fishing activities.

The majority of the fishermen working off the coasts of Sisal are inhabitants of Hunucma, who have turned to fishing as a real economic alternative to the prevalent situation in the cabecera municipal.

Technology in this sphere is not well developed, and does not implement any of the so-called modern methods with which to counter the dangers and problems of work in this sector. In many cases the only instrument is a compass. Therefore, knowledge of the seas is of great importance as a means of recognizing fishing zones, or good fishing areas, many of which are well established sites with names in Maya or Spanish, where there is supposed to be good catch. The basic tools used by the fishermen are the fishing line (hand held) and hook, and on some occasions, nets are used. There are also several objects used by the fishermen which would in industrialized countries be considered as "junk," as for example, bicycle inner tubes which, when cut in half serve as protection to prevent the line from damaging the fisherman's fingers when he has a large and strong fish on

his line. The re-servicing of plastic containers is also common practice.

There are few economic alternatives for the people of Sisal. Commerce offers one outlet, but it cannot accommodate everyone. About five years ago the community turned to tourism to secure an economic means of support during the "north" season, from October to February or March.

The tourists used to come to hunt ducks, but this sport has since collapsed according to one of my informers due to the high tariffs charged. Even if the Duck Club has not closed, it cannot now be considered as offering a real alternative.

In this activity, the fishermen earned income in the form of direct payments from the Duck Club, and more importantly from the tips offered by the national and foreign hunters, which often varied from 10 to 20 U.S. dollars.

Hunting is also a survival alternative for the fishermen themselves who turn to this when fishing is impossible.

Sisal has grown in a linear pattern along the line of the coast and has not developed a pattern of concentric development around the square, even though it does have a principal square. This development has been according to the grid system. The houses built facing the sea belong to the vacationers, usually from Mérida, who come to Sisal for

their holidays; the local Sisal population has its homes in the streets that do not front on the sea.

With regard to infrastructure, Sisal only has two paved streets: Number 20 which runs from south to north and is an extension of the main road that comes from Hunucma, and Number 21, which runs from east to west, for about four or five kilometers. The remaining streets are sand.

There are two tortilla mills and four or five well supplied general stores; in one or two it is possible to buy anything from bath soap to clothes. Restaurants are also part of urban life in the community and also function as pubs although priority is given to visitors to the port during the holiday periods and on Saturdays and Sundays. The population uses a variety of different means of transport, with the most common being buses and collective taxis. There are nine runs daily between Sisal and Mérida, passing through Hunucma.

Since 1959 Sisal has benefitted from electricity. When the President at that time, Adolfo López Mateos visited the community he inaugurated the asphalt highway that joins Sisal to Hunucma, as well as the fishermen's wharf.

There is also piped water coming from a cenote (sinkhole) about eight kilometers from the town. There is a telephone service and cable television.

Formal education in Sisal includes primary and secondary schooling: the Federal primary School "Amado



Nervo" offers the first stage and a subsidiary from a secondary school in Hunucma provides the secondary education. For high school it is necessary to go to Hunucma.

There is one SSA health center, with one resident doctor offering free consultation and medicine to the population.

There is also a division of the Mexican Navy in Sisal, which in earlier times was comprised of various militia but now only two army members occupy the barracks.

The religion is predominantly Catholic and there is only one Presbyterian temple.

The following authorities work in Sisal: the town superintendent (comisario municipal), the government delegate for fisheries and the captain of the port. The town also has some ejidal land but this is not exploited as an economic activity, as few people are occupied in this way.

The port infrastructure in Sisal is limited only to a safe harbor where the fishermen can shelter their boats. However, for the type of fishing generally practiced the safe harbor is not used greatly. The lighthouse at Sisal, which was rebuilt in 1906, is one of the oldest in the Peninsula, and it continues to satisfy the needs of shipping that passes by the Yucatecan coast.

There are no ship-building yards nor a dry dock for painting and other repair activities, or any other industries related to fishing. There is just one ice-making

plant which has a capacity of 20 tons a day, and employs one person.

The ethnic composition of the population, characteristic of the Coastal Region of the State, has suffered most notably from ethnic de-characterization. The principal diacritic characteristic, the Maya language, is not now spoken by the population, in spite of the fact that certain Maya terms are used to identify particular species of fish, for the names of the fishing societies and in many aspects of everyday life. The surnames of the villagers and their physiognomy are Maya, but they no longer use traditional dress. A possible feeling of Maya identification among the villagers is not openly expressed. The Maya language is only heard spoken by the fishermen from inland Hunucma who come daily to the port to fish.

## CHAPTER 3

### PATRONAL FIESTAS AS POPULAR RELIGION

The aim of this chapter is to establish several basic relationships between patronal fiestas and a certain theoretical model which will be used in the subsequent analysis. The intention is to place patronal fiestas within popular culture and religion as well as to identify the fiesta as a particular social phenomenon inside society.

Finally some basic concepts will be examined to understand patronal fiestas as specific expressions of social identity.

#### Popular Culture

I begin by differentiating the term popular culture from the term folk culture as it has been used in North American anthropology by Redfield and Villa Rojas (1962) and Woodrick (1989).

This research opposes the vision of popular culture as a subject for the analysis of "curious" social phenomena such as eating hot dogs during a baseball game or buying balloons for children during a visit to the zoo, although eventually it may include some of those objects of study in its perspective.

The concept of popular culture<sup>1</sup> used here stems from an approach radically different to the problem of culture, since its starting point is the relationship between culture and specific social strata or social classes, but at the same time it is related to the way each class uses culture. It takes into consideration as a basis for analysis the contributions of Gramsci and Bourdieu.

Classic Marxism did not develop a systematic and explicit theory of the concept of culture other than reject it. It only attempted to place culture inside the scheme infrastructure-superstructure where it was located parallel to, or within, ideology in the superstructure.

However, in the decade of the eighties an approach based on the work of Gramsci revitalized the potential of his contributions to the concept of culture.

Much of Gramsci's work about culture is a re-evaluation of the concept of folklore based on his criticism of previous formulations of folklorists.

From the beginning Gramsci rejected those approaches which considered folklore as something picturesque which was an expression of the past, or as a survival. Such a conception would not permit understand in of all the wealth of folklore (Gramsci 1976). Gramsci argued that folklore should be considered as a non-elaborated and asystematic

---

<sup>1</sup> In this dissertation, the concept of folklore and popular culture will be used as synonyms, both from the perspective of Gramsci and his followers.

vision of the world. This vision opposes those which present an elaborated and systematic vision of the world (Gramsci 1976).

Obviously, Gramsci proposal had a political purpose since it was the beginning of a process of re-evaluation of the culture of the social classes he was attempting to defend: the subordinate classes. However, his proposal is innovative in that the defense of those classes was done from a point of view different from a traditional economic analysis. Folklore should be considered in all its aspects alongside to subordinate classes, although non-elaborated and asystematic, it was a distinct vision of the world, worth considering as a suitable object of study for the social sciences.

Following Gramsci and elaborating this idea, Giménez related culture to folklore when stating that "culture should not be more than a collectively interiorized vision of the world like a religion or faith; that is, as a practical norm or and implicit theoretical premise of all social activity" (Giménez 1982:21. Emphasis in the original. Free translation from the Spanish), directed to the realization of social purposes.

The principle is that in every society, and specially in class societies, there are differences between individuals, groups, strata and classes. Culture, as a collectively internalize world view gives cohesion. However,

it is necessary to include in the concept of culture the differences which exist in the strata mentioned. That is why Gramsci says that ". . . culture, in its different degrees, unifies a quantity of individuals in numerous strata, in greater or lesser expressive contact with each other, who understand themselves in different ways, etc." (Gramsci, quoted by Giménez 1982:21. Free translation from the Spanish).

This statement calls attention to the importance of cohesion as long as it unifies, but it also allows discussion of differences when it mentions the existence of several strata and different degrees of culture.

In viewing the cultural differences within societies as opposed visions of the world and of life it becomes increasingly essential to relate the former to the social groups which participate and contribute in differentiated way to the culture of production of a society. In the analysis of Gramsci's work, in relation of the question of folklore or popular culture, Cirese (1979) emphasizes important elements concerning the opposition between the two visions of the world.

Gramsci's conception of folklore at first appears negative. Cirese sums up the opposition pairs implicit in Gramsci's work:

Folkloric conception as opposed	to official
as subordinate social class as opposed	to hegemonic
as simple intellectual category as opposed	to cult
as inorganic combination as opposed	to organic

as fragmentary internal state as opposed to unitary  
 as implicit mode of expression as opposed to explicit  
 as degraded content as opposed to original  
 as mechanical counterview as opposed to intellectual  
 as passive confrontation as opposed to active.  
 (1979:116. Free translation from the Spanish)

Despite revealing adequately the opposition between official and folkloric cultural conception of popular cultural conceptions, this scheme impedes adequate viewing of the internal cultural dynamics that every cultural society manifests. Therefore it is necessary to look more closely at this opposition.

In spite of the negative definition and properties that Gramsci attributes to folklore or popular culture, he later admits that sometimes folklore may have positive aspects so that is possible to talk, for example, of a progressive folklore of popular culture as oppose to a reactionary hegemonic culture. In the same way, he recognizes the value of folklore or popular culture in its persistence and its ability to adhere to the real conditions of life.

On the other hand, if social groups are considered as social classes and if these groups sustain culture, it is necessary to define them considering cultural production and more specifically the strata affinities of this production. Therefore

. . . a social class is never defined only by its position in its social structure, that is, by the relations it objectively maintains with other social classes; it also owes many of its properties to the fact that individuals that compose it enter deliberately or objectively into the symbolic

relationships which, by expressing the differences of situation and position according to a systematic logic, tend to transform them into significative distinctions. (Aziz N.D.:11. Free translation from the Spanish)

The point of view of Ossowski (1974) fits into this scheme in the sense that it is possible to change social class (what Ossowski calls "simple gradation") but to keep the social consumption and behavior of the previous social class (or synthetic gradation). Thus, a change in simple gradation does not imply a change in synthetic gradation.

Cirese (1979) added to this argument by introducing the concept of unevenness. This is understood as the distances within and between societies. The former, which he calls internal unevenness, refers to the behavior and conceptions of the different sectors, strata and social groups of one given society and the latter indicate the differences between two or more societies (Cirese 1979:46).

The internal unevenness of a culture directs us to the structure of classes from the scope of social representations and they form a system of hegemony (González Sánchez 1981:II).

In sum, Gramsci points the role of cultural production in society: on one hand, the subordinate classes (popular culture) and on the other hand the hegemony classes (hegemonic culture).

It is important to indicate again that culture should not be understood as a mere reflection of economic structure, although links between cultural production and



social class have been established. Culture has its own dynamic which permit an analysis relatively independent from economic conditions.

This independence brings out the definition of the terms popular and popular culture. Some authors, like Bourdieu, state that the notions of pueblo and popular refer to certain cultural practices or elements as degraded elements from other times. This has two negative effects. The first is that, in reality popular culture is the negative pole of the mythical dichotomy which dominant classes use to structure the social world they impose; therefore, this is no more than a relational definition of what is popular.

The use of this term can also reproduce a structure of domination (Giménez N.D.:2). The second effect lies in the fact that the term popular comprises a variety of phenomena between which it is important to differentiate (Giménez N.D.:2).

Giménez considers the concept of popular culture valid as long as it allows a recognition of the dynamic nature of the relationships between the culture of the subordinate classes and the hegemonic culture (Giménez N.D.) precisely because of its relational definition.

The concept of cultural circulation described by Cirese (1979) is useful to avoid placing a cultural practice as having its own origins since all social strata and groups

can incorporate in their culture elements whose origins are the result of the cultural production of other social groups or strata.

What is important, then, is who uses the cultural elements and practices and how they are used or consumed. The differentiated use or consumption will define the location of a cultural production.

Completing this idea, García Canclini states that is not enough to just accept the hegemonic or subordinate social processes as static since, in general, neither is hegemony absolute imposition, nor is subordination total passivity. Therefore, in the definition of a cultural phenomena it is necessary

. . . to examine their use, their relationship with the power devices acting in each moment. Apart from knowing the general strategies of a tendency or institution, it is imperative to study the occasional sense of its tactics, every re-location and re-significance of the objects and messages. (1986:78. Free translation from the Spanish)

It is necessary to add to this what cultural processes and facts do not necessarily have to be placed on any side of the subordinate-hegemonic balance. There are cultural elements or facts which cross the structure of classes, that is, are added to the horizontal cuttings of class. Those are cultural facts or social processes shared by different social classes, so that they can be talked of as vertical cuttings. The elements that Cirese (1979) considers as "transclass" justify García Canclini's proposal when he

points out that a cultural process, fact or element should be considered in all the spaces where it appears, taking into account, at the same time, the question of cultural production and consumption. He does this in his analysis of handicrafts and fiestas of Michoacán (García Canclini 1986).

Therefore, it can be said that, when analyzed under this perspective, cultural processes should be considered as intermediate forms in the hegemonic-subordinate balance where both co-exist through a process of adaptation. Neither does the former need dominate completely nor is the role of the former to defend itself continuously, both fit in the same space of social reproduction (García Canclini 1988).

In the analysis of Yucatecan patronal fiestas as cultural product and consumption the methodological approach of García will be used. He states the necessity of ". . . crossing the hegemonic-subordinate paradigm with other strategies of analysis which reveal the transformations of popular culture by its insertion in social processes whose main characteristic is not antagonism" (García Canclini 1988:88. Emphasis in the original. Free translation from the Spanish).

García Canclini examines the questions of cultural control (see also Bonfil 1991), that is, to the ability of social groups to execute cultural practices in a way relatively autonomous or independent from the institutions that keep, the legitimacy of the cultural processes

(Bourdieu 1973). In other words, there are spheres in which the effective control of the cultural process is in the hands of social agents without a recognized position inside the institutional structure.

Thus, it is possible, to think of popular culture as a space in which certain cultural behavior is reproduced. These are maintained as long as they satisfied the consumption needs of population segments which, control the hegemonic culture, although they do not threaten or challenge it.

### Popular Religion

The existence of a popular religion as an object of study has been largely discussed in Spanish anthropology. Here a presentation of this discussion is analyzed with a perspective similar to the one used above.

From the beginning, García García (1989) rejects the analysis of the conditions that separate popular religion from official religion. He states the necessity, of considering who exercises control of, and power over, the practices. When confronting the systems of interest, the relationships between official and popular religions need to be examined. Lombardi (1989) shares this approach but he relates it to the subordinate classes, considering it precisely as the religion of the subordinate classes.

In turn, Maldonado (1989) views popular religion and specifically European Popular Catholicism, in a way similar

to the analysis of folklore made years ago, as ". . . the synthesis of a Christianity implanted in European rural populations after grafting under religious beliefs, that is their telluric religiousness and their agricultural life-style" (1989:33).

Other authors like Córdoba (1989) deny the existence of a popular religion, considering it as a symptom of the internal crisis of the Catholic Church and it is not treated as a concept representing a reality.

A general classification of the conceptions of popular religion can be found in Mandianes:

The positions of the authors who deal with the matter of popular religion can be reduced to four: 1) Popular religion is an entity with full autonomy; it opposes popularized religion, practiced by the mass of the population influenced by the preaching of the ministers of revealed religions; it is a set of superstitions and magic gestures emanating from paganism and preserved by isolated rural world. 2) It is an anti-intellectual, affective and pragmatic set of beliefs adverse to systematic objectivation: Popular religion does not have dogmas or catechisms. 3) It is a dialectic complement of the official religion and it can only be studied within its socio-political, economical and cultural context. 4) Popular religion is the lived religion and opposes canonical religion. (1989:51. Free translation from the Spanish)

More recently the question of popular religion has been introduced into American anthropology with the perspective similar to the one adopted in the scheme of Gramsci, official religion-popular religion. In this context, Stephen and Dow have elaborated a basic definition of popular religion which integrates several questions of popular religiousness in México and Central America:

By popular religion, we mean religious or ritual activities consciously practiced outside of or in opposition to dominant institutionalized religion or those religious activities which, although carried on within the frame work of institutionalized religion, offer a critique of that frame work and of larger political and economic inequities. (1990:8-9)

In general, the definitions of popular religion presented here reveal, explicitly or implicitly, the same subordinate-hegemonic opposition described earlier in terms of popular culture. Despite the fact that they do not incorporate the question of consumption and focus exclusively on cultural production, they present the question of cultural control as one of the defining elements in the popular religion-official religion opposition.

Popular religion, can be defined simply as religious practice outside the official conceptions, a religion which works autonomously or jointly with the church as an institution but that can be consumed by any class or social group.

#### Fiesta: The Construction of the Concept

People have been characterized in many ways by different terms aiming to synthesize adequately the central characteristic or characteristics of humanity, Gil proposes the following concept of humanity in close relation to fiesta.

Homo faber is not homo ludens; he is also homo festus: maker of instruments, maker of games and maker of fiestas. The human being is a festive animal as well as rational and political . . . the human [species] is the only species which makes fiestas, which knows how to make fiestas. This is our specific difference: our

sovereign luxury as well as our adaptative advantage.  
(Gil 1991:9. Emphasis in the original. Free translation from the Spanish)<sup>2</sup>

From this perspective the analysis of the fiesta will necessarily lead to an intimate knowledge of the culturized nature of man and society since it is one of their essential and definite features.

In common language the fiesta is characterized by two attributes: the ludic event and the religious solemnity (Roiz 1982). However, social analysis has deepened this idea, although in general it has maintained the perspective of communion of solemnity and recreation.

Following these ideas of fiesta. Roiz presents the following definition with a marked sociocultural character. Fiesta is:

A series of actions and meanings of a group, expressed by customs, traditions, rites and ceremonies, like a non-quotidian part of interaction specially at an interpersonal and face to face level, characterized by high level of participation and social interrelations, and by which social meanings of various kinds (historical, political, social, quotidian values, religious values, etc.) are transmitted, which give a unique and varied character and in which cheerful, festive, of enjoyment, recreational and even orgiastic practices are mixed with religious and even magic practices, accomplishing certain cultural purposes basic for the group (cohesion, solidarity, etc.) and with an extraordinary character carried out during a temporal period, every year, for example. (1982:102-103. Free translation from the Spanish)

The interest in the analysis of fiesta have generated a number of studies over the years. One of the best known is

---

<sup>2</sup> See also Hiuizinga (1984) in relation to the idea of homo ludens.

that of Caillouis (1984, first edition in 1939) which proposes a theory of the fiesta within the context of the French sociology and ethnology of the first decades of this century, well within the Durkheim tradition.

Caillouis locates the fiesta within what he calls the sacred transgression, that is, within the sacred pole of the sacred-profane dichotomy proposed by Durkheim (1954). It is conceived as a transgression in that, at least apparently, it moves society away from normal life and everyday tasks.

The analysis of the fiesta following Caillouis's perspective (1984) has also led to consideration of the question of time. Thus, the time of the fiesta is a sacred time, in which the rhythms of every day life are altered, in which excess and excitement reign, in opposition to profane time which manifest itself in prudence, repetition and routine. Other authors, such as Eliade, have also distinguished sacred time from profane periods. In his proposal sacred time, the time of fiesta, is defined in terms of events that have to do with ritual, myth and cosmic rhythms (Eliade 1991:346).

Following the basic idea of Caillouis and Eliade, Velasco points out the labor time-festive time opposition. He characterized the former by its seriousness whereas festive time, or time of fiesta, is cheerful and boisterous. Both, continuous Velasco, regulate time by its division on the basis of work and of fiesta (Velasco 1982:8-9).



The orientation of time and activities inside that time seems to be one of the definitive indicators of the fiesta; a time of exception because it precisely opposes work which regulates profane time.

Despite admitting that the fiesta marks and at the same time develops within a time of exception, Gil refuses the fiesta-labor opposition. In other words, he does not regard the fiesta as opposed to labor but as a different type of labor. In his own words:

. . . productivity, far from being incompatible with festive hedonism it is not only perfectly compatible (as the pacific co-existence of both demonstrates) but it is also encouraged by that incentive. Fiesta and labor do not reject or nullify one another but the complement and amplify each other reciprocally for common profit and mutual benefit . . . (1991:16. Free translation from the Spanish)<sup>3</sup>

Fiesta and labor are different states of human activities. The former has to do with the expressive capital whereas the latter has to do with instrumental capital. Both complement each other.

Gil (1991), Caillois (1984), Velasco (1982) and some others hold in common that the fiesta can only be performed by a community. A fiesta is a social and public affair and there is not possibility of a fiesta of an individual since it would lose one of its essential characteristics, that of being the motor of social cohesion.

---

<sup>3</sup> The question of fiesta as a specific type of labor will be developed in the next paragraph since it relates directly to the setting up of normative systems.

In his analysis of the functions of the fiesta, Gil's conceptions includes the proposal of Van Gennep in relation to the rites of passage and Turner's preciseness. Turner (1991) proposes the existence of cyclical rituals of status reversal (reproducers) and of status elevation (restructurers of the social order of the group). On this basis, Gil states the function of a fiesta.

The functions of a fiesta are as varied as the mechanisms for its fulfillment. To begin with, and following Gil, two latent functions can be distinguished: those of reproducer of the social order and of restructurer of the social order (Gil 1991:84). Both coincide with Turner's ritual cycles.

Although Gil does not express it in this manner, it can be stated that the function of social reproduction can operate as a parallelism or reflex of the social order (as is the case of the fiestas of Yucatán) or through rituals of reversal (as in the carnival).

In anthropology rituals of reversal have been widely studied. These include, for example, Gluckman's analysis of rituals of rebellion in which he presents a translation of the social order that exacerbates social tensions, but whose results is their solidification through their guided example within a previously established context (Gluckman 1963). Recently, Brandes's work refers to a similar situation where the transgression of the social order in fiestas of

Michoacán leads to its reinforcement rather than to its questioning (Brandes 1988).

It is also important to point out that the mechanisms employed both for restructuring and reproducing the social order may be the same. In other words, "it is the fiesta itself which, can both reproduce and restructure the social order through the ritual transgression of the social order" (Gil 1991:84. Free translation from the Spanish).

Less known in anthropology are those fiestas leading to the restructuring of the social order. Yet we could think, for example of the millenarists socioreligious movements as fiestas restructuring the social order since they present the creation of, or return to, a new or old social order (Barabas 1987 and Goodman 1972). Within this perspective, war could be considered in the same way (Gil 1991).

Apart from the latent functions of the fiesta, it is possible to distinguish other functions such as the economic function; the function of social integration; the symbolic function of function of identity; and the function of prestige (Rodríguez 1991).

### Social Identities

The analysis of identity as a social process is complex and presents various problems, both theoretical and practical. That is why the question of identity is analyzed here through a focus on collective identity. Within this analysis attempts are made to identify types or dimensions

of social identity aiming and clarifying the relationship between them and religion particularly in Yucatecan patronal fiestas.

The theory of identity is part of a theory of culture in that identity can be conceived as a cultural matrix, that is, a subjectivated culture produce by the intersubjectivity. Identity is inscribed in the objectivity of the actors and it comes out through contact, interaction, conflict, and so on.

Collective identity presupposes belonging to a collectivity, but it also supposes that not all of the identities are similar since they result from different collectivities.

Thus, we can speak of territorial, ethnic, national and dynastic identities. It is important to distinguish between collective identities which rest on imaginary collectivities and those which rest on objective collections, such as the barrio (suburb) or towns in Yucatán.

Throughout history, identities necessarily change as a result of technological, cultural, social and political change since identities are intrinsic to social processes. At least two forms of identity change or transformations can be distinguished: transformation and mutation. The former is understood to be the ideal and gradual adaptative change that does not affect the identity as it is an adaptation to a changing environment. On the contrary, the change by

mutation is produced by a qualitative alteration; it is a much deeper change.

For the analysis of the subject studied here, it is of particular importance to develop some central ideas related to the constitution of an ethnic identity so that it can be related later to other forms of identity expressed in patronal fiestas.

Before Frederick Barth, cultural anthropology had focused on defining ethnic groups on the basis of a set of cultural features were used as parameters for ethnic groups, defining their limits at the same time.

Barth (1976) proposed a radically different way to define ethnic groups and their boundaries based on a vision which gives priority to boundaries rather than to the cultural contents of the society. To establish the boundaries of ethnic groups it is necessary to take into account two basic concepts: self-attribution and attribution by others (Burns 1993).

What will differentiate two ethnic groups, then, is the belonging to a group which recognize itself as different from others and which is also accepted as different by others.

However, Barth's proposals present a problem: every group of persons can be defined as an ethnic group since it is set up on the basis of organizational criteria. Therefore, any corporate unit is definable as an ethnic

group. Barabas and Bartolomé, for their part, attempt to link the cultural and the organizational as ". . . a specific identity resulting from the historical course of a human group, owner of an organizational system, eventually linguistic and cultural, differentiated from other social units" (Bartolomé quoted by Barabas and Bartolomé 1986:76. Free translation from the Spanish).

The works of Cardoso de Oliveira (1976), A. Barabas and M. Bartolomé (1986) are basic for approaching the question of ethnic identity, particularly in Latin America. Cardoso (1976) follows the basic proposals of Erikson and Goffman, that is, he admits the individual and collective possibilities of an identity and notes its reflexive and ideological character, since the idea of identity supposes

The existence of social relations and a particular code destined to orientated the development of social relations. In this sphere of interethnic relations this code tends to appear as a system of opposition and contrasts.

Thus Cardoso points out that the contrasting identity ". . . involves our assertion in front of the others. When a person or a group asserts itself as such, this presents a means of differentiation in relation to the person or group they are confronting. It is an identity generated by opposition" (1976:5. Free translation from the Portuguese).

The contrasting identity seems to be, at least for Cardoso, the essential component of the ethnic identity,

asserting itself by the negation of the other identity, which it ethnocentrically visualizes.

On the question of interethnic relationships it is necessary to include a theory of class relationships which refer to a dimension of analysis different from that of the ethnic groups. On this point, it is necessary to say that in no way does the treatment of interethnic relationships eliminate the contradiction of class, but neither does it consider that the contradiction emanating from the interethnic relationships should be considered as a second-order contradictions, that is, contradictions that are under the relationships of class.

Besides referring to the internal relationships of the society, ethnic consciousness can also be conceived as the result of the relationship between each group and its history. This relationship generates a collective representation of same, that when it becomes part of an ideology, contributes to the development of a notion of feeling or belonging, by an attribution to a common past. Ethnic consciousness represents the factor which has made possible the maintenance of the linguistic, cultural and organizational feature of the American ethnic groups (Bartolomé 1979:315-316), which completes Cardoso's notion of contrast.

Barabas and Bartolome (1986) propose three different kinds of manifestation of ethnic identity: residential,

ecological and linguistic. These manifestations of ethnic identity may not refer exclusively to ethnic identities but to other forms of social identity, since the conditions of objective and subjective culture may generate other forms for expressing identity. Nevertheless, the expressive forms mentioned by this authors are commonly found in ethnic groups.

The three types of ethnic identity already mentioned may not be mutually excluding but co-existing. Its election will depend on the interactive context in which individual and groups are involved in any specific moment (Barabas and Bartolomé 1986:77-84).

Equally, some identification mechanisms related to determine processes and circumstances are typified the same way. Such mechanisms respond to the historical change and the interaction context, but in contrast with the forms, are expressions of specific values in respect to ethnic identity. This corresponds to a positive and a negative identity.

Positive identity is the one which implies an affirmative valuation of the ethnic attribution in any or all the forms (residential, ecological and linguistic).

In a certain way this type of self-awareness in situation could also be an ethnocentric consciousness assumed as ideology. According to its contextual manifestations, the positive identity may exhibit



characteristics openly replying or fold up on itself as a strategical adaptation, apparently passive, but orientated to its own reproduction in different situations and social contexts.

Some factors which propitiate the maintaining of a positive identity are: narratives of people participating in political, labor and ritual practices (Burns 1983). Patronal fiestas may be understood as part of this factors contributing to the generation and maintaining of an ethnic and social positive identity. In addition, the inclusion in the semantic and ideological work regulated by a common language gives identity meanings to groups of people (Barabas and Bartolomé 1986:84-88).

Negative identity is the result of the individual or group internalization of the discriminatory stereotypes of the dominant ideology.

A feeling that negatively values the ethnic and social identity is produced, therefore it is seen as something that has to be abandoned and forgotten, or overcome in a certain way.

The abolition of the group sense of self supposes that the negative identity is the one which promotes the process of ethnic and social destruction. This mechanism explains the tendency toward cultural extinction. This is the suppression of the identity due to the massive absorption of the vertically alternative identity imposed by the hegemonic

will of the state (Barabas and Bartolomé 1986:85).

The asymmetric relationships between ethnic groups lead subordinate groups to find alternatives in an attempt to alleviate their situation. The most common strategy to approach the position of the national ethnic group or societies is the elimination of those characteristics which most easily identify the individuals as belonging to an ethnic group, that is the features considered as diacritic in establishing the belonging to the corresponding ethnic group.

Barabas notes that ethnic change can be conceived as a radical re-socialization, which has effect when the individual permanently separates himself from the branding ethnic attributes, segregating at the same time for those individuals who still preserve them (1979:105).

The elimination of the stigma operates through a process Barabas called "ethnic transit". In the case of ethnic groups with a negative identity the ethnic transit is no other than the elimination of all kinds of behavior, uses and customs identified as characteristics of the group they belong to. In México today this might mean, the predominance of the Spanish language, the abandonment of agricultural labor, the increase in schooling level, the change of surname (particularly in Yucatán). At the same time, some features belonging to the dominant social strata or sectors which are not defined by belonging to a specific group,

begin to be assumed as proper. "Ethnic transit" may not be permanent and, therefore, it can be noted that social groups have the ability to manipulate their identity in interethnic relationships within certain limits.

Cardoso has called this process of manipulating the identity "latent identity" (1976) while Barabas (1979) used the term "strategic identity" to refer to a process very close to that of Cardoso's.

The term used by Cardoso is based on the idea that this identity appears in a specific situation, but that the social actors do not necessarily have to be conscious of the processes of manipulation of identities. On the other hand the term used by Barabas can be understood as the explicit use that the group or groups in question consciously make of their own identity often, with political ends.

With this approach which reveals the complexity of the study of identity in general and ethnic identity in particular, I turn now to the analysis of the ethnographic data.

#### Patronal Fiestas, Popular Religion and Identity

This paragraph is an attempt to locate Yucatecan patronal fiestas within the theoretical and conceptual frame described above.

As patronal fiestas are necessarily linked to specific forms of celebration within the sphere of the Roman Catholic Church, it is convenient to begin by relating this links to

the "official" concept of fiesta advocated by this institution.

In Canon Law, fiestas appear under the title "of sacred times". Sundays are recognize as an essential fiestas of precept and it is stated that the following days must be observed in the same way: Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension, Holy Body and Blood of God, Holy Mary Mother of God, The Immaculated Conception and Assumption, Saint Joseph, The Apostles Peter and Paul and finally all Saints Day.

Participation in the fiesta is defined according to Canonic Law as attending mass and eliminating any labor which prevents "Worshiping God or enjoying the joy proper to a day of the Lord or enjoying proper rest of mind and body" (Miguelés 1985:741. Free translation from the Spanish).

Thus, the activities related to patronal fiestas are achieved according to the official Church by attending mass and enjoying proper rest of mind and body. Within this frame participation in patronal fiestas appears as alternative forms encouraged by the Church since colonial times.

The control exerted by the Church over the forms of organization of the patronal fiesta, whether they are Mayordomías, Cargos, Cofradías<sup>4</sup> or Gremios has changed and continuous to change with time. Many factors effect this situation. Among them the actions taken by the priest in

---

<sup>4</sup> Mayordomías, Cargos and Cofradías are terms that refer to different organizations in charge of developing fiestas in Mesoamerica.

his jurisdiction are basic, as in the position of the organizational forms within the community where the fiesta takes place. The socioeconomic situation of the community also shapes the organizational structure of the fiesta.

Organization forms founded in colonial times today represent one of the clearest manifestations of popular religion in Mesoamerica (Stephen and Dow 1990). In fact the real control that the Church exerts over these organizational forms is nearly nonexistent, to the extent that in many cases there is no participation of the Church in the fiesta. In this way patronal fiestas have become a process of culturally controlled by social groups outside the Church and at the same time this process of appropriation has made these groups define and express their identity through the fiestas. In other words, the process of appropriation of the phenomena of patronal fiestas is nowadays one of the definitional axis of the identity of many Mesoamerican societies.

Some priests have created new forms or groups inside the Church in order to recover spaces lost through time and also to increase community participation in the Church in face of the even more important penetration of alternative religious groups. Thus, the Catholic Church has to work with those spheres to maintain religious control of the laity.

Much has been written in historical and contemporary anthropological literature about the Mesoamerican

civil-religious organization that had and have in their hands the execution of fiestas. These studies (Brandes 1988; Cancian 1965 and 1990; Chance and Taylor 1985; Chance 1990; Dewalt 1975; Dow 1974; Falla 1969; Mathewss 1985; Reina 1973; Rus and Wasserstrom 1980; Smith 1977; Van Zantwijk 1974 and Warren 1989) have analyzed both their transformation from colonial times to the present condition and recent transformation and have even attempted to predict the forms and functions that cargo systems might have in the future.<sup>5</sup>

The structure of the system of fiestas generated by the analysis of the cargo system has lead to the following distinction: ". . . (a) a cargo system is a hierarchy of ranked offices which individuals or male-female couples ascend, and (b) a fiesta system in which prestige is attained through ceremonial sponsorship in the absence of any fixed hierarchy of positions" (Chance, quoted by Stephen and Dow 1990:10).

In the first case the setting of fixes positions reveals a certain permanence of colonial and even pre-hispanic structures, but also notes the possible transformations when appointing a couple responsible for ceremonies. In the second case the situation is more open,

---

<sup>5</sup> The variety of studies about fiestas is not exclusive to Mesoamerica. It has also exerted a strong attraction among specialists in other parts of America. See, for example, Smith (1975) or the most recent analysis of Crandon-Malamud (1993).

which permits the inclusion of models of fiesta such as the ones present in Yucatán today.

The study of Yucatecan patronal fiestas has not received the attention it deserves. In contemporary social and cultural anthropology, the study of Yucatecan patronal fiestas has been diluted in the ethnography of a community. In the already classic works by Redfield and Villa Rojas (1962), Redfield (1941), and the studies of Thompson (1974) and more recently Woodrick (1989), patronal fiestas appear as one more of the aspects related either to configuration of the ethnographic panorama of the community or to the religious behavior of the population in question.

This situation can be explained by a number of reasons. Mexican anthropologists focused on the henequen production and the effect it had in the socioeconomic configuration of the state. Studies centered mainly, although not exclusively, on the reconstruction of the historic process that they thought shaped the reality of the State of Yucatán in this century, slowly forgetting other regions of the state and favoring the so-called Henequen Zone.

On other hand, non-Mexican anthropology centered its efforts on the analysis of phenomena related more closely to the pre-hispanic past of the cultural practices of Yucatecan Mayas, that is, to establish the connections between contemporary and past cultural processes. Obviously contemporary cultural practices with meanings in the Maya

cosmovision such as Chaa chac and Uahi col were also included in these studies.

Within this context, the fate of patronal fiestas has been intermediate, or better, in no man's land as it was not placed within the campesinista perspective of Mexican anthropology of the 60's and 70's, nor did it have a place in the studies of none-Mexican anthropologists.

Only outside the anthropological frame work have patronal fiestas been analyzed with certain enthusiasm by local enthusiast interested in Yucatecan culture, particularly R. Irigoyen who in 1973 published a book called "Calendario de fiestas tradicionales de Yucatán".

In this small book Irigoyen briefly describes the main characteristics shared by patronal fiestas in general and also provides very important information about a number of patronal fiestas of the State.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Irigoyen entered a territory that, had been looked askance at by anthropologists despite the obvious importance that communities themselves had attributed to it.

The following paragraphs will present briefly a general view of patronal fiestas in the west of Yucatán in order to make easier the reading of the rest of the chapter in which the main components of a fiesta are analyzed.

---

<sup>6</sup> The present study and some others by the author (Fernández, 1988 and 1990) begin the formal interest for studying contemporary Yucatecan patronal fiestas to which other anthropologists have added more recently (See Quintal, 1993).



Unlike other Mesoamerican fiestas, in Yucatán there is an important distinction between two spaces or aspects of the fiesta: the sacred space or space of the Church and the profane space or space of the people. In the first space the actors are the Church and the gremios and in some cases the cargadores.

Gremios are typical of Yucatecan fiestas and through them some parallels with other patronal fiestas may be established. Their internal organization is the same, their organization and structure corresponds to the second type propose by Chance (1990), although the responsibilities of the gremio are more limited since they do not organize the whole fiesta but only one part of its sacred aspect.

In fact more than one gremio participates in the fiesta so that any one of them is only responsible for some activities during fiesta. Each gremio is responsible for 24 hours of fiesta and its work includes, processions: one of entrada and another of salida, the entrance to and the exit from the Catholic hurch. Each gremio also organizes a meal for its associates and their guests and although any person is welcome it is not expected that everyone in the community participates in the meal.

Finally each gremio has to cover certain expenses such as the music for the procession, the buying of flowers for it, and so on. Therefore the participation of the gremios during the fiesta is rather restricted and it does not

suppose financing the whole fiesta nor the participation of all the population at the same time.

What is very important to point out is that the internal structure of the gremios do not depend on the Church for realizing their activities although they work in coordination with the Church. That is to say, the religious practice inside the gremio can be considered as an expression of contemporary Yucatecan popular religion insofar as the control of the activities of the gremios is in their own hands and the practices they show do not always correspond to the precepts emanated by the Church, specially the manner of celebrating the fiesta.

Thus, the differentiated participation in the fiesta through the gremios will necessarily lead to the configuration of different manifestation of social identity, in some cases referring to the condition of office, in others alluding to the vital situation, etc. However, when gremios are considered as a collective manifestation of a particular community some other manifestation of identity are outlined.

In other words, it can be said that fiestas present at the same time different levels of identity. In some cases certain aspects of the social identity are exaggerated above others, thus revealing the meaning of certain features for each group.

Finally, in the profane apex there is a type of organization that has nothing to do with gremios, cargadores

or the Church. Fiesteros is the name given to the person or persons in charge of commercializing the fiesta, that is, they see the fiesta as a business and even, as it will be seen later, pay for the presents of images as a method of economic attraction. However, the economic exploitation of the fiesta does not necessarily lead to a process of collective secularization as Redfield (1941) had argued. On the contrary, it contributes to the permanence of the fiesta as the expression of a popular religion and as a set of diverse identities.

At least at the organization of level, the emphatic division of sacred/profane makes the study of patronal fiestas of the western Yucatán even more attractive, especially when considering the Mesoamerican model of fiesta within contemporary anthropology.

## CHAPTER 4

### A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO PATRONAL FIESTAS OF YUCATAN

In this chapter some of the characteristics of Yucatecan patronal fiestas will be presented, starting from colonial times continuing through the 19th century, and ending in the middle of the present century.

This description is intended to offer an approach to the phenomena of fiestas to give historical depth to the beliefs and the organization of patronal fiestas as they are present today in Yucatán. This will also outline some of the actions of the social organizations which exist within the scheme of Yucatecan patronal fiestas.

#### Historical Outline of Yucatecan Patronal Fiestas

The impact of the process of colonization in America involved the introduction of Spanish institutions which led the Indian population to produce different reactions according to the social climate in which they found themselves. During the spiritual conquest of the Yucatán there were on very few elements from either the regular or secular clergy, the former represented by the Order of the Seraphic St. Francis, who went about the work of evangelization barefoot (Quezada 1990:88-90 and González, 1978:109-115). In the course of the first colonial decades

the enormous influence of the Franciscans was felt when the doctrinal heads or centers were created. These heads or centers, with seats of administrative and religious power according to the size of settlement and the number of Indians, included small or large buildings such as ecclesiastic precincts and convents.

In Yucatán, the Spanish institutions exhibit different types of organization, some of them replacing the Indian social structure and introducing new types and forms, while on other occasions the social conceptions and ideologies of the native population were adopted and integrated.

Religion played a fundamental role in modelling the native American world and, for the Spanish it was the most important basis of ideological domination. The introduction of different religious institutions, like the cofradía, the gremio and the hermandades (brotherhoods) contributed to the production of new forms of behavior.

The introduction of patronal fiestas to Yucatán was part of the politics of European colonization in America which imposed mechanisms of ideological control on the indigenous population. Nevertheless, the native population, the African slaves and later the mestizo population were sufficiently able to appropriate the festive structure to allow its cultural survival.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Authors such as Farriss (1984) argue that the introduction of Christianity produced a crisis in the Mayan world more serious than that produced by the battles with

In Yucatán, as in other places in America (Meyers and Hopkins 1988) the religious organizations contributed to maintaining the cohesion of indigenous groups and paradoxically allowed the continuity of a historical perspective and particular culture.

Among the institutions brought to the New Spain that had a religious character were the cofradías, the hermandades and the gremios.

The authors who analyze these institutions have pointed out that a certain confusion exists between these terms, above all because they are institutions which do not have a single purpose.

Nevertheless,

The theoretical differentiation of the terms cofradía, hermandad and gremio can be made with considerable accuracy, but only with introductory conceptualization ends.

While the cofradía is understood as a grouping of individual united by the advocacy of a patron saint, and with aims mainly of religious benefit, the term hermandad appears to clearly define the purely religious finality of the institution, that is, of the cult, generally under the direct patronage of the Church.

In contrast to the cofradías and hermandades, the gremio is a grouping, exclusively by profession in character, orientated towards the defense of the group's interests in the predominant context. (Varón 1982:128. Emphasis in the original. Free translation from the Spanish)

In Yucatán, during the colonial period the cofradías were the principal organizations in charge of celebrating

---

the conquerors.

the patronal fiestas. Organizations of this kind were founded during the colonial period and in Mérida, Francisco de Montejo, founder of the city, also founded the first cofradía in the middle of the 16th century.

In spite of having the same purpose--the celebration of patronal fiestas--there were important differences between the cofradías of the Indians and those with mixed blood, and those of the Spanish in terms of their internal organization and their localization. For example, the Indians had to adopt economic institutions such as the estancia and the hacienda with the aim of being able to pay for the expenses of the fiestas. On the other hand the Spanish could only celebrate the fiestas by relying on the periodic charges that their members had to pay (Negroe 1984)

Regarding their location, the majority of the cofradías of the Indians were located in the rural areas, while the cofradías of the Spanish were situated in the cities (Negroe 1984).

In Yucatán, the cofradía was the institution ultimately responsible for managing the patronal festivities during the colonial period. This involved the participation of the cofradía members and afterwards, the whole community. Farriss points out some of the characteristics of the fiesta among the Yucatecan Indians which correspond considerably with what takes place today:

The fiestas were designed as much to entertain as to honor the saints. After high mass they were taken

out in procession accompanied by their "servants" (the officers of the cofradía and república) and the band of musicians they had hired. Homage was paid by community members and invited guests, who might include saints from subordinate villages, and then the images were installed under a temporary arbor or pavilion to witness the festivities. Bishops repeatedly objected to these "profane amusements": the bullfights, mock battles, dances, theatrical performances, banquets, and fireworks displays on which the cofradías expended so large part of their income. (1984:321. Emphasis in the original)

As much as in the urban areas of central México, in Yucatán, there were important connections between the cofradías and the gremios, or craft guilds.

Carrera (quoted in Fernández and Negroe 1990) shows that the gremios had their own cofradías, whose principal activities were the same as any other cofradía. In Yucatán we have found information that leads us to believe that the cofradías could have included gremios, that is, the cofradía could have been a larger organization.

Archival work in Yucatán has not turned up information relating to the existence of gremios for the 16th and 17th centuries. Only for the 18th century has a document been found which indicates the existence of a gremio within a cofradía in Campeche. Here, it seems, the gremio used to play the same role as the cofradías within the gremios of central México, that is to be ultimately responsible for the religious activities that the cofradías used to carry out.

The mechanisms of indoctrination that were used for the indigenous people were similar in all corners of Spanish America; the blow and the whip, coercion, violence and a



terrible draining of the indigenous economy. Nevertheless, the natives did have opportunities to conserve and recreate a part of their ceremonials and rituals prior to contact with the Spanish, in the intimacy of their homes and in the solitude of the jungle, which means that the evangelical effort could not prevent many of the practices which that epoch used to consider idolatrous,<sup>2</sup> neither could it produce a loving devotion towards the religious, the singing teachers and the ministers.

What it did achieve was an enormous evangelical success, at least in Yucatán, establishing the most miraculous Christian saints as direct intermediaries between man and God (Lizana 1893 and López Cogolludo 1957).

Regarding the patronal fiestas as a specific form of expression of popular religiosity the chroniclers,<sup>3</sup> throughout the colonial period, have left us to judge their importance with few descriptions in their works. The travellers<sup>4</sup> have noted what for them was picturesque, fantastic and even grotesque.

---

<sup>2</sup> In the 16th century, as in the following centuries of the colonial period, denounces made by priest about the idolatry of the indians were constant. Many examples of this can be found in "Don Diego de Quijada, Alcalde Mayor de Yucatán" (Sholes and Adams 1938) and in the Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Yucatán (AHDY), among others.

<sup>3</sup> Among others Ciudad Real (1976); Landa (1973); López Cogolludo (1957); Sánchez de Aguilar (1937) and Cárdenas y Valencia (1937).

<sup>4</sup> Among others Stephen (1984); Waldeck (1930) and Charnay (1978).

The nineteenth century historians<sup>5</sup> mention fiestas with a depreciating attitude when they are indigenous and with praise when they are Spanish.

We only find an analysis of indigenous patronal fiestas through a colonial institution--the cofradía--made by the historian Nancy Farriss (1984). However, although we know little of these manifestations in the city in the same period, we suspect that it had different implications in the arguments of Farriss about this indigenous institution. One of them was a much more strict ethnic separation, like powerful indications of social stratification, political and economic power (Ancona 1978 and López Cogolludo 1957). For example, the Archicofradía del Santísimo Sacramento of the parish church of the city of Campeche states in its constitution ". . . not to admit any person who could not justify the purity of their blood on the side of their mother or father; purity of behavior and custom . . ." (AHDY, Asuntos Terminados Vol. 1, Campeche, 1778) and this information would have been approved by the important civil authorities of the town such as the Alferez Mayor and the Regidor Perpetuo of the town.

For the 19th century this ignorance, or lack of knowledge, is complicated by the appearance of many events which have taken hold of the patronal fiestas, above all the

---

<sup>5</sup> Among others Ancona (1978), Molina Solís (1988) and Carrillo y Ancona (1979).

Christianization of the indigenous cofradías. The diminution of festival splendor began with one bishop, Piña y Mazo, and recovered with another, Carrillo y Ancona.

The first bishop mentioned, Father Luis de Piña y Mazo, in the last decades of the 18th century, put the majority of the rural estates of the indigenous cofradías up for auction and the result of his sale was put to the vote in such a way that an administrator of a cofradía should give a fixed quantity for the fiesta of the patron saint. The amount arranged to cover the costs to help the fiesta of patron saint was set much lower than the cofradías proposed. It was so low that it only took into account the salary of the priest to say Mass and indispensable consumption of wax for the occasion.

Custom demanded many more expenses than were stipulated by the new administration and the giving of chocolate and food to people visiting from other towns and cities was abandoned.

The furnishings of the images aged a lot and year by year it was not possible to change them; the sound of the rockets, the thrill of the fireworks, the notes of music, all were reduced, as was the great consumption of wax in the form of devotional lights, candles and hachas (giant candles).<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Farriss (1984) provides many examples regarding fiestas, from the reduction of the cult provoked by the auctioning of the rural estates of the cofradías. See AHDY, Reales Cédulas Caja 5;

Years later the Courts of Cádiz changed the jurisdiction of some matters relating to the Church. In terms of this thesis, only one stands out in particular relating to the position of the cofradías. All those cofradías saved by Piña y Mazo and whose origin was illegal, came under the faculty of the Diputación Provincial to the extent of some goods for its profane nature and similar temporary charges. In such a way the money that these institutions produced had to be stretched a little further to leave room for the new administrators (AHDY, Oficios y Decretos, Vol.7, 1816).

The Church, appealing to the religiosity of the public functionaries, managed to fulfill its obligations of Masses and sermons. However, it did not observe other functions which were covered by the product of those goods, such as occur in times of need and the payment of various profane amusements in its patronal fiestas (AHDY, Oficios y Decretos, Vol.7, 1821).

When certain adjustments began to be made among the indigenous population to overcome the expenses occasioned by the profane ritual of their patron saints, a period of social instability began. An important civil war broke out in Yucatán in 1840 which culminated in the political separation of the peninsular from the federal states. The fighting not only involved the high political and social

hierarchy of Mérida and Campeche but also the peasants (Baqueiro 1991 and González Navarro 1979).

Seven years later the most extensive confrontation to afflict the Peninsula broke out; The Caste War. The armed fighting was very violent and the indigenous population came close to taking the state capital and the conflict lasted many years. The political, economic and social spectrum was changed forever (González Navarro 1979:76-107; Reed 1971 and Burns 1983). The economic plan which followed the political and social, centered, at the end of the last third of the 19th century on the monocultivation of henequen. The Indian rebels were confined to the south of the Peninsula and there was an economic revival generated by the fibre known as Sisal. The Indians of the northwest, the zone of the henequen plantations were immersed in the most immediate way in the wave of changes.

These factors are seen in similar differences in the popular religiosity between regions. The rebels organized themselves around the cult of the Talking Cross (Bartolomé and Barabas 1981), the pacified Indians of the east, afraid of the attacks of the rebels, continued the cult of their saints in a less organized manner.

Together with the regional changes came many reforms generated at a national level. One of the most important was the Laws of Reform which reduced even more the powers of the Church, dismantling the corporate possession of real estate,

abolishing ecclesiastical tribunals and creating the Civil Register (Knowlton 1992:155-157).

But there is no evil that lasts 100 years, and in this case no community would tolerate it. Once the most bitter moments of the armed confrontation were over, and towards the seventh decade of the century in question, came an economic revival thanks to the exportation of henequen and stability and peace came hand in hand with the national dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz.

The Church at this moment in history had lost many of its privileges and spaces. This, applied to the patronal fiestas, meant the officiating of the saint's masses and the organization of those functions in the sacred space, that is, in the church and its church yard.

A charge for Masses was stipulated but it could no longer administer the funds of religious associations nor could it make obligatory any contribution to the fiesta of the saint.<sup>7</sup>

With the appearance of the next bishop, Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona, the patronal fiestas were reorganized but nonetheless there was a downward slide among the institutions. The gremio acquired the role of protagonist in

---

<sup>7</sup> During the whole of the colonial period the native people had the obligation to pay obvenciones, a contribution destined for the fiesta of the patron saint, which consisted of one real--or 25 cents--for women and 2 for men (Constituciones Sinodales 1722; AH DY Real Cedulario, Vol. 5).

the organization of fiesta where previously it depended on the cofradías (AMC, Informes de Cofradías).

Prior to its inclusion as a bastion of the patronal fiestas, the gremio only displayed a city and worker structure, then it acquired a religious and rural dimension.

It appears that with the disappearance of the rural cofradías and the decline of the urban cofradías in the 19th century, product of the liberal Mexican government and the Laws of Reform, the term gremio was used in place of cofradía, in spite of which the gremios were formally dissolved by the mandates of 1812, 1824 and 1859.

As proof of this hypothesis there are documents which show that the protocol of the religious activities that the cofradías used to perform were no different from those which the gremios carry out today (Fernández and Negroe 1990). Another element which complements this view is found in Redfield (1941), in which it is pointed out that the term gremio was first used in the cities (where cofradías still existed) to designate the associations charged with organizing the festivities for the patron saints of the parish, but presently it extended to the rural populations where the gremios became integrated in the fiestas of the communities and afterwards became the best instrument to bring about the community's fiesta.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the trans-ethnic character of the cofradías and afterwards the gremios was

present in all levels and ethnic groups of the colonial period throughout the 19th century.

For the second half of the 19th century, the document archive of the epoch and travellers gave detailed descriptions of the fiestas, as much in the city as in the countryside. The religious part consisted of Masses, sermons and processions, which were paid for out of the church expenses, in salaries and letting, such as the tapestries and adornments. They were the gremios; Catholic societies founded around some image, or the same rematadores (fiesteros) of the fiesta.

The organization of the profane fiesta was run by an association formed by the neighbors in a community, who asked for authorization from the municipal authorities. The agenda of an average fiesta, that is neither sumptuous nor poor, would start with a traditional dance of the vaquería,<sup>8</sup> repeated on the following day in the morning; at

---

<sup>8</sup> Vaquería is the name given to the series of jaranas that are played during the first night of the fiesta. The jarana is a traditional Yucatecan dance which has grown out of the Jota of Aragón. It is played during the vaquerías and for other social events. The dancers who take part in it dress in the traditional mestiza or Maya festival costume (the terno), but in the case of the women it includes a man's hat, said to be because they are dressed as cowgirls (vaqueras). The so-called traditional, regional or mestizo of Yucatán dresses for special occasions are the terno for women and the filipina and white trousers for men. The former is a white three-piece dress embroidered with brightly colored flowers. The filipina is a shirt with small tucks. The huipil, as the traditional dress of every day use is called in Yucatán, is a one-piece dress, usually white, ornated with embroidered flowers of several bright colors both around the neck and above the hem.



night during the five days that followed the "saloon dances" were performed. During the same days the bullfights, which were a popular entertainment in which people of any social level could assist, took place. At some fiestas orchestras were contracted, conducted by distinguished maestros; circuses, conjurers, frequently followed by games of chance like roulette and lottery, and so on, to the small commercial stalls (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida 1871, 1875, 1878, 1888).

The patronal fiestas were not isolated from the world; very much to the contrary they felt the influence of the smallest social event, to those events which might seem totally separate from popular religiosity. The newspapers of the period mention some, such as; the communities situated on the border of the territory of the Indian rebels from the Caste War, or very close, suspending their fiestas with only the rumor of an invasion, or more precisely, requesting the use of a community so that they could pay homage to their patron saint. Another was the construction of railways to some towns, since when their fiestas became much more attractive and successful than those of communities out of reach of the railways. On other occasions the attendance at and the splendor of the fiesta would depend on the Don de Gentes or some other person considered to be the "heart and soul of the fiesta"; the epidemics were another factor which, adversely, affected the brilliance of the fiestas

(BCRM, La Revista de Mérida 1871, 1873, 1875, 1877, 1879, 1888).

Taking advantage of the time of the fiesta, the associations of beneficiaries or Catholics would collect donations to help the poor people, the "damned", the people in asylums, or otherwise they changed an image, or cleaned or altered the church with the benefits of a fiesta. However, those who obtained the most benefit from the patronal fiestas were the merchants, so much so that some of the most important patronal fiestas of the state were announced like fairs.

This dissertation proposes that for Yucatán, the importance of the patronal fiestas was such that, at least for the second half of the 19th century, a rotary system of markets was articulated through them, where they sold, exchanged and bartered products and goods from the different regions of the Peninsula as well as other places (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida 1871, 1873, 1875, 1888 and Sierra O'Reilly 1987:79-83).

Beginning in first half of the 20th century there was a new rupture in the social peace supervened and this directly attacked the Church. This was the advent of the Mexican Revolution and as sequel a series of anticlerical governments that attacked, persecuted, killed priests and Catholics and mutilated and destroyed images among which was the much venerated Cristo de las Ampollas of the Cathedral.

The role that the fiesta and gremios in particular played at the end of the last century and during the first decades of the present can be pictured in the short descriptive historical outline which follows.

As we saw earlier, the origins of the Mérida, Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal fiestas are closely related to the histories of the images which were venerated and for this reason we will basically attempt to reconstruct some of the characteristics and social repercussions that the fiestas used to have and that are now to a large extent absent.

The History of the Images of the Fiestas Studied  
The Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas

The principal patronal fiestas of Mérida are concentrated in what were formally the neighborhoods of the Indians from San Cristóbal, Santiago and San Sebastián, as well as in the city center and the Cathedral. The inclusion of some communities on the urban outskirts of the city has meant the incorporation of their fiestas into the urban scene. One of them is the fiesta of Chuburna de Hidalgo.

Of the fiestas which have received the most attention in the historical bibliography of Yucatán, those of the Cathedral have occupied a central role. There is a great quantity of texts and documents which speak of their principal characteristics and organizational forms.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> A nonexhaustive list of the texts which refer to the fiesta of the Cathedral or the history of the Cristo de las Ampollas follows: Carrillo y Ancona (1979), Espinosa Riestra

Numerous pages of our history relate the miracle of the Cristo de las Ampollas and the pages that follow are basically those which the writer, bishop Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona provided in 1895. His account seems to be the most complete and it forms the basis for those which came later. Crescencio Carrillo tells how the religious dispute between the secular clergy and the regular clergy had a concrete manifestation in Ichmul, Yucatán in the negative attitude of the parishioners towards the new parish priest who was the first to be a member of the regular clergy--the parishioners having been used to priests of the Franciscan order.

In this atmosphere it was pointed out that in the town of Ichmul the farm laborers had found a Cedar Tree which the squirrels didn't eat on the Fridays of a period which seemed to be lent. The tree was called the Tree of Light.

The parish priest, Juan de la Huerta, decided to cut down the tree and use the wood to make an image of the Purísima Concepción.

A young pilgrim who had arrived in the community was in charge of the work; however, the resulting image was that of the Divino Crucificado. Because of the short time employed in manufacturing the image of the conditions in which the image was found, the young man was considered an angel.

---

(1942), Pérez de Alcalá (1914), Rosado Vega (1947), Barrera Osorio (1961), and Cervera Andrade (1961). In addition to this information the local press used to publish a note to remember the celebration of the event.

A fire occurred in, as stated by Carrillo y Ancona, the first third of the XVII century. The Church, altarpiece and other ornaments of the temple were destroyed by the fire. Despite and as a result of this, the image of the Divine was only left covered with blisters. The news of the miracle spread throughout the region adding other miracles and powers such as the gift for healing.

As it was the property of the parish priest, the image of the Cristo was moved to Hocaba together with the priest. When he died, following the instructions of his will, the image was moved to Mérida, arriving in the city in May, 1645 and in 1717 it was moved to the Cathedral. On entering the Cathedral the title "de las Ampollas" (of the blisters) was conferred on it instead of those of Ichmul or of Hocaba.

With the entry of the Christ to the Cathedral, a association called "Escuela de Cristo and Lágrimas de San Pedro" (The School of Christ and Tears of Saint Peter) were formed. Later, in 1887 15 gremios and one devotional society celebrated the fiesta every year from September 28 to October 13 (Carrillo y Ancona 1979:494-515).

The history of the image and its fiesta interlaces with one of the most important events of the second decade of the present century: the anticlerical governments of Yucatán.

On September 24, 1915, during the period of Salvador Alvarado and with his consent, there took place the first of a series of assaults to Yucatecan temples, characterized by

the destruction of images, altarpieces and paintings. In the chapel of the Cristo de las Ampollas everything was destroyed. The image of the Cristo was beaten, an arm pulled off and abandoned in the streets from where it was recovered and taken to the military headquarters and it is not known what happened to it afterwards (Suárez 1981:1220-1221).

The image worshiped nowadays in Mérida was made in Querétaro and restored, brought to Mérida and ensconced in its own chapel by Rafael Quintero, a devotee, on September 24, 1919. Archbishop Tritschler y Córdoba blessed the image 5 days later.

The "official" history of the Cristo de las Ampollas mixes with other accounts coming from the community which saw its creation. One author is Favier, who points out one of the most important features of the image and the manner in which the population of Ichmul interpreted his blackness. About this, it is said that it is because he is a native Christ, "this Christ is ours, the one who defend the natives", or that "there was a rebellion in a monastery and started burning all the saints . . . He got close to the Christ, his face was transformed and appeared exactly as a native and he became dark. He saw the face of his grandfather" (n.d.: 47-48. Free translation from the Spanish).

Similarly some punishments and penalties were attributed to the image for those people who participated in

events that offended or prevented the activities of the fiestas from being performed in an adequate manner. Thus, I was told that during the assault to the Cathedral in 1915, while the image of the Christ was being destroyed, one of the shoeshiners who worked in the main square began dancing in front of it in fun and so he was left like that forever: dancing, ill, unable to control his own movements.

Another narrative tells of destruction of the images and other goods of the Cathedral produced a large amount of wood which was used in the ovens of a bakery. After using this wood the bakery went bankrupt and every business set up in the same place has had the same fate.

A final narrative I collected relates that later, in 1933, during the government of Bartolomé García Correa and following the instructions of the president of the México, the Gremio of Bakers participating in the fiestas of October in the Cathedral was watched over by other bakers who were not participating. Two of them were punished: one became blind and the other two beggar. It is within this context of punishments and miracles in which the fiestas to the Santísimo Cristo de la Ampollas evolves.

The history of the image as well as that of the events linked to it let us see easily the tight relationship between the characteristics of the image and the construction of a social event, in this case, a patronal fiesta.

The Virgen de la Asunción de Tetiz, the Poor of God

Since her apparition, an account of which is documented in the pages of "El obispado de Yucatán" written by Bishop Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona, some mythical and mysterious characteristics have been attributed to this image.<sup>10</sup> The basic story recounts that in Spain a poor female pilgrim appeared to friar Francisco de San Buenaventura, begging and noticing the indecision of the man she pointed out that on another occasion he could see the ruined state of her hut and with that he would know the whole story. The man gave the female beggar the only coin he had then: one peso.

Moved to Yucatán, friar Francisco de San Buenaventura undertook as one of his first tasks a pastoral visit to his flock and leaving the proposed itinerary went to Tetiz. In that community he followed a small group of pilgrims who were going to a squalid temple used as a church where he found an image of the Virgin Mary in her appearance as the Immaculate Conception.<sup>11</sup> When he saw the image he realized

---

<sup>10</sup> The parish sells a small booklet, which is an extract of the work of Carrillo y Ancona (1979), which accounts the "official" version of the history of the image.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to make clear that although the image of the Virgin of Tetiz is in the misterio of the Purísima Concepción (Immaculate Conception), it is popularly considered as an image of the Virgin Mary in her advocacy of Virgen de la Asunción (Virgin of the Assumption) from which she is referred to as Virgen de la Asunción of Tetiz. On the other hand, it is also supposed that the Virgin is the sister of the Virgin of Izamal who is in the misterio of the Conception.



that it was the same female beggar who earlier had asked him for alms in Spain.

He also found the coin he had given to her on that occasion and interpreted that place as the hut the female beggar had called her house. Thus, he encouraged her cult among the bishopric and proposed to build a sanctuary in the community of Tetiz.

The activities of friar Francisco as the head of the parish did not prevent him from visiting the sanctuary he himself had built:

. . . he used to go weekly by horse from the city to the village of Tetiz, from there he used to go by foot to the village of Hunucma the same Friday afternoon performing the fourteen Station of the Via Crucis in the few miles of the route, for which a calvary had been erected, dividing the route into fourteen parts. Planting on the sides other wooden crosses on top of their corresponding stone pedestals. (Carrillo y Ancona 1979, Vol. 2:777. Free translation from the Spanish)

The ecclesiastic work of friar Francisco de Buenaventura is closely related to some of the main characteristics of the fiesta of Hunucma today. In fact, the fiesta begins with a pilgrimage that, leaving Hunucma, covers the nearly nine Kilometers which separate the two communities; then it picks up, moves and introduces the image to the church of San Francisco de Asis in Hunucma, the head of the parish. Thus, the practice started by friar Francisco de San Buenaventura marks the beginning of the fiesta. The end of it, the closing, is also marked by a pilgrimage for the return of the Virgin. The foundation of

the cult to the image found in the temple also meant the creation of one of the three sanctuaries existing today in Yucatán.<sup>12</sup>

Hunucma was the first community visited by the image, but the visits have now expanded to other communities inside the municipio, as is the case of Sisal during the Holy Week, and to other municipios outside the parish, such as Kinchil and Celestun, both in the same region.

#### The Señor de Sisal

The history of the Señor de Sisal is a lot simpler and less magical than those of the previous images. It is a history which related back to apparitionism in religious matters (Barabas 1993). Although there are disagreements among the population, the dominant idea is that of apparitions.

It is told that the Christ figure was found on the beach and that it was cast up by a Spanish ship after staying a long time under the water. Because there was not a suitable temple for sheltering the image, it was moved to the Cabecera Municipal where, since at least 1874, a fiesta was performed. The fiesta was dedicated to the Señor de Sisal and performed in November and, according to the local press, it included vaquería, popular dances and balls as well as bullfights (BCRM, La revista de Mérida 1874).

---

<sup>12</sup> The others are those of Izamal and Tizimin, both more important than that of Tetiz.

It is also said that he is a brother of the Cristo de San Román of Campeche and of the Cristo de San Telmo of Progreso. It must be pointed out that one of the most important characteristics of these images is that they have dark complections.

Although very little is known about their darkness, their histories must be very different from that of the Cristo de las Ampollas.

Another version states:

That during the war of the Spanish, three Christs were destined for the Peninsula of Yucatan in order to the worshiped. It is said that they had the following names: the Cristo de San Román, the Cristo de San Telmo and the Señor de Sisal called also Dark Christ.

The first was taken to the port of Campeche, the second to the port of Progreso and the third to the port of Sisal; but this port not having a church for worshipping him, the people proposed to form a group and move him to the village of Hunucma, that is, the cabecera municipal of this port, where he was welcomed and worshiped by the people of that community. For this reason the image of the Santo Cristo is kept in that community to this day. But the Dark Christ is in reality originally from the port of Sisal since it was left there on the arrival of the Spanish during the war. (Cob, Coello and Hernández, n.d.:4. Free translation from the Spanish)

#### Patronal Fiestas of Mérida, Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal. A Historical Outline

##### Mérida

In general, the fiesta still has today (1993) the same structure. Obviously, after more than one hundred years some changes have occurred.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> The information about the characteristics of the fiesta in question was basically obtained from documentary sources and completed with various in-depth interviews with

Different from other fiestas of Yucatán, the fiesta of the Santo Cristo de las Ampollas of the Cathedral of Mérida has better opportunities for historical and descriptive and ethnological treatment because of the abundance of information in many publications. Its importance was and is based not only on its location, the Cathedral of Mérida, but also on the fact that it congregates a number of diverse sectors of the population.

The main features which characterize the present-day fiesta do not show a radical departure in the organization from that of the end of the last century and the beginning of the present century. However, there are some particular forms of celebrating which were performed during that period of time. It is on these forms that our attention will be focused in the following paragraphs.

As we have already stated, the popular recognition of the existence of two aspects within the patronal fiestas of Yucatán has been pointed out in other occasions (Fernández 1988b, 1990 and Fernández and Quintal 1992). Thus, a sacred aspect, or of religion, is spoken of and a profane aspect, or of the population. Following the way that the local press of the time used to refer to these aspects, we will describe both the "religious fiestas" and the "profane fiestas".

---

gremio members who, if they did not take part directly in the gremios of this epoch, remembered what their parents and grandparents told them about past fiestas. I would like to acknowledge the help of A. Acuña and P. Miranda in the process of compiling the documentary information.

The religious fiestas. The organization of the religious fiestas came under the jurisdiction of two protagonists: the Church and the gremios.

The functions of the Church during the fiestas were basically centered on the celebration of masses and rosaries which used to take place according to a previously established calendar. However, in the case of the fiesta of the Cristo de las Ampollas, a tridium was also celebrated prior to the beginning of the fiesta. The church also worked jointly with the gremios to establish the calendar of entrada and salida of each participating gremio.

It was also a custom in the fiesta of Mérida that the Church convoked in advance, through the local press, the boards of the different gremios in order to organize the program of activities. During these meetings special petitions, such as the celebration of the mass by the archbishop or the mention of the names of late former associates, could be done. Another activity of the Church was the use of advertisements published by the Church itself to promote and enhance the virtues of both the gremios and the fiesta itself:<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> It is appropriate to note here that the church also used the term novenario to refer to the fiesta of the Cristo de las Ampollas, perhaps because during the first half of the century it was precisely a novenario which was the principal activity used to honor the image. In addition the fiesta with gremios occupied the same dates as the novenario.

With the religious enthusiasm they have always shown and today more than ever animated by better dispositions the gremios of artisans, industrials, the fair sex and tradesmen of this capital are preparing themselves to celebrate the novenario that, in fair tribute of homage and recognition, they annually dedicate to the Divine Savior, to his historical and prodigious image of "The Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas". It is truly praiseworthy the noble behavior of these pious associations which, formed mainly by honorable citizens whose indispensable living is earned with a lot of sweat, do not neglect the faithful accomplishment of the sacred duties imposed on them by the adorable and only religion they have for their moral and social improvement.

May these so religious corporations proceed in good time in their pious tasks. May they animate and stimulate each other, trying each time to increase their number.

Epifanio Cardeña, Priest.  
(BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, September 22, 1885.  
Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

According to the information collected, the practice of inserting advertisements of this kind in the local press in order to stimulate and encourage participation in the patronal fiestas was limited to Mérida. However, as we will see later, the same does not apply for the profane fiestas. The practice of advertise the religious fiestas, disappeared with time.

The importance given by the church to the fiesta is indicated by the indulgences offered for attending the religious celebrations carried out in the fiesta of the Cristo de las Ampollas:

On the 28th of the current month will be celebrated the solemn bajada of the miraculous image of the Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas to start the fiesta dedicated to Him by the pious gremios of this capital, and on the 30th his novenario will begin, on the third, fourth, fifth and seventh days of which brothers will be granted four years and four forty-day

periods of pardon; on the 9th of October, plenary indulgence. They will also be granted 80 days of indulgence every time they visit the image, attend his divine offices or practice any other act of virtue, except pontifical concessions, confessing, receiving Holy Communion and begging God for the intention of his Holiness.

The Lord Diocesan Bishop grants by himself 40 days of indulgence to all the faithful who practice all or any of the acts referred to. (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, September 22, 1982. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

The explicit purposes for the formation of the gremios of the Cathedral were to: 1. create a fund for worshipping the Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas; 2. make a public confession of Roman Catholic faith; and 3. create a fund for mutual support and for helping the associates in the event of disgrace or adversity.

Apparently made after 1892, the following is one of the lists of the gremios participating in this fiesta.

- Sep. 28 Gremio of Master Builders
- Sep. 29 Gremio of Saddlers
- Sep. 30 Gremio of Tanners
- Oct. 01 Gremio of Barbers
- Oct. 02 Gremio of Silver Makers, Painters and Tin Workers
- Oct. 03 A devotee
- Oct. 04 Gremio of Shoemakers and Ramoneros
- Oct. 05 Gremio of Tailors and Makers of Outfits
- Oct. 06 Gremio of Ironmongers and Machine Operators
- Oct. 07 Gremio of Carpenters
- Oct. 08 Gremio of Ladies

- Oct. 09 Gremio of Tradesmen and Hacendados
  - Oct. 10 Gremio of Suppliers
  - Oct. 11 Gremio of Tradeworkers
  - Oct. 12 Gremio of the Literate and Students
  - Oct. 13 Gremio of Musicians and other Artists
- (Carrillo y Ancona 1979:501).<sup>15</sup>

The existence of gremios as Catholic associations had to be sanctioned by the Bishop by presenting to regulations establishing the objectives, organization and norms of functioning of the same association. This situation is similar to the one that cofradías had to do for their recognition and authorization.

Among the most important points noted in the regulations are those of about who could belong to and the and number of associates of the gremio.

---

<sup>15</sup> For 1878 we found a list of gremios different in three aspects to that presented here. The first refers to the duration of the fiesta. In this year the fiesta lasted from september 28th to october 10th, that is less days. Therefore, and this is the second aspect, some of the gremios in the list of Carrillo y Ancona are not in the 1878 list. Finally, there is a change in the dates of the fiesta calendar corresponding to each gremio. This was possibly a result of the annual calendarization that made changes in the entradas and salidas of the gremios. Contrasting the list already presented we have that the 1878 fiesta included the following gremios from September 28th to October 10th: Master Builders, Saddlers, Tanners, Tailors, Shoemakers, Silvermakers, Barbers, Ironmongers, a devotee, Carpenters, Ladies, Tradesmen and Musicians (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, September 29, 1878). In the same magazine, but in other volumes, other lists of gremios were published, also differing from that presented in the text which might confirm our ideas.



In some cases such as that of the Gremio of Barbers, the number of associates was unlimited. People who were not barbers and even women could become members. The only conditions of acceptance in this case were: professing the Catholic faith and having a honest way of life.

However, due to a question of labor affinity and social situation, at the beginning the gremios grouped people of the same trade.

We can even say that, in spite of the regulations, the gremios were organized around some central characteristics, such as the position of class, as in the case of the Gremios of Tradesmen and Hacendados and of Ladies; or as in the compulsory membership through salary deductions for paying the sharings for those workers who did not own their own business.

There were also processes of fusion and fission of gremios. The Gremio of Tradesmen and Hacendados is an example of the first situation. At the beginning, the Gremio of Hacendados was not included in the celebration of the fiesta of the Cristo de las Ampollas, their religious tasks were centered on celebrating in April a novenario for honoring him. In 1877 it was decided to integrate them to the gremio of tradesmen thus forming one gremio.

It is convenient to point out here that, at the beginning, the fusion of both gremios did not suppress the celebration of the novenario that the hacendados use to make

in April, including the petition of rain prayers.

Unfortunately, we do not know the reasons for doing this.

As an example of the second case was the Gremio of the Ramoneros. In 1901 in a meeting, attended by the chaplain of the Cathedral, the separation of this gremio from that of the Shoemakers was decided. The Bishop authorized their inclusion in the fiestas of the Cathedral fixing a day for their participation (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida 1902).

As we have seen in the case of the Hacendados, participating in the gremio did not prevent participating in other religious activities. I especially would like to refer to the fact that although some gremios such as that of Carpenters participated in the fiesta, they also recognized Saint Joseph as their particular patron. Therefore they also performed religious activities during the days of this saint in the liturgical calendar. The gremio even announced these activities for the general public to attend:

#### RELIGIOUS FIESTA

The Gremio of Carpenters have decided to arrange a performance in the Santa Iglesia Catedral on the 19th of the current month in honor of their patron Saint Joseph.

For this reason the public are invited to attend the illumination which will take place on Friday 18th in the evening, in front of the Cathedral and for the performance of the 19th which will start at half past eight in the morning. (BCRM, La revista de Mérida, March 17, 1892. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

The internal organization of the gremios was based on a board with a president, also called Older Brother, a secretary, a treasurer and vocals. The board was in charge

of organizing all the activities corresponding to the gremio during the fiesta. For that it formed special committees with specific tasks.

Thus, in nearly all the gremios, there were committees of Bronceo (those who were in charge of buying and burning the fireworks). Other committees were in charge of cleaning the church for the day of their gremio in the fiesta.

For the celebrations of the gremio on its day of fiesta, the income used to come from a variety of sources: contributions, fines, donations and fund raising.

There were ordinary contributions, those usually paid weekly and consisting of a previous established amount, as well as extraordinary, those collected in order to help the associates in poverty; the amount in this occasion was established according to the resources of each gremio.

Fines used to come from neglecting any of the regulation norms, especially those referring to delayed contributions. Donations used to come from both the associates and any other people and we believe that many of them were given as promises to the Señor de las Ampollas.

It was also very important to organize the raising of money and for that an authorization, published in the local press, was given to those people recognized by the gremio as theirs and authorized for the purpose. It also mentioned the places where people from the committees were going to be in charge of collecting money for the fiesta:

### Gremio of Carpenters

#### Board of members.

In a meeting celebrated on Saturday 19th of the current in the house of the Treasurer of the gremio, Gonzalo Peón, under the presidency of Juan D. López, it was agreed: the authorization of Liborio Monsreal and Gerardo Sánchez for raising the donations, in the center of town. Of all those who belong to the Gremio of Carpenters for celebrating the day corresponding to them in the fiesta of the Señor de las Ampollas; of D.M.I. Aguilar in the suburb of Santa Ana; . . . (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, September 24, 1885. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

The board of the gremios changed annually. For that, once the activities of the gremio had finished, a reunion called conjunta took place. Generally this reunion took place after the salida of the gremio in the house of the president or any other member of the board. In this reunion, the treasurer presented a report of the incomes and expenditures of the year. The accounts had to be approved by the associates who had contributed money for the realization of the fiesta. There was also a feast in which food and drinks were served and usually there was some live music. The election of the president of the gremio was by popular acclamation and obviously by him accepting. Later the president will name his closest collaborators, the secretary and treasurer.

The activities of the gremios also gave direct benefits to the Church since in many occasions the gremios financed improvements for the temple, such as painting, altar refurbishing, etc. The Church also got benefit from the masses said by the gremios for their celebrations.

Not only did the church get benefits from the activities of the gremios. We have information pointing out that during and after the fiesta the gremios behaved as charity associations helping the poorest sectors of the society as well as their own associates:

#### THE GREMIOS

That of suppliers handed out 500 meals for the poor the day they celebrated their fiesta.

The gremio of musicians agreed that from the \$ 59 left over, \$ 50 were sent to the O'Horan Hospital and \$ 9 to one of the members of the gremio who is ill and lives in extreme poverty. (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, October 13, 1891. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

A year of fiesta implied the following activities for the board: raising funds for the celebration of the fiesta; informative and organizative meetings for establishing committees, such as those of bronceo and of refurbishing the temple; agreeing with the chaplain of the Cathedral the times for the entradas and salidas of the processions of the gremio as well as for the rosaries and masses and hiring the musicians for the evening serenades in honor of the Christ; the embellishment of the altar with flowers and different kinds of candles; and, finally, preparing the conjunta.

The profane fiestas. The second aspect of the fiesta refers to the activities carried out outside the church. It is difficult to establish the difference between the profane and religious aspects of this particular fiesta, especially because the gremios of the Cathedral were at the time in charge of organizing both activities.

The bronceo was considered part of the profane fiestas and its organization was basic to the gremios. The so-called bronceo consisted of burning fireworks during the evening, after the rosary. The formation, of a committee inside the gremios, with that end indicates the importance it had last century and the beginning of this one. The use of guns was banned together with the fireworks because of danger.

The gremios activities also included the presentation of a musical group. Usually the main square was the place where they were located to liven up the evening.

In many occasions the gremios organized dancing after the rosaries, but it was also common that other associations did the same.

The organization of bullfights during the time of fiesta is very common in Yucatán. They were organized in some occasions during the fiesta of the Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas, but we do not know which instances were in charge of their organization and where they took place.<sup>16</sup>

Respect the celebration of yaquerías in the city, we know very little. There are indications that this traditional dancing of Yucatán took place some time.

---

<sup>16</sup> The organization of bullfights during the patronal fiestas of other suburbs of Mérida, such as Mejorada, Santiago, Santa Ana and San Cristóbal, was common. The rent of the spaces for the tablados (bullrings) as well as for stands of variety of kinds stayed in the hands of groups of individuals (fiesteros) who paid the Town Council an established amount of money (ACCA, Libro de Acuerdos de Cabildo No.20).

The active participation of the gremios in the profane fiestas produced a questioning of the religious matters by the gremios.

Nevertheless, besides the gremios stood other people outside the Church who, through the local press to the time defended these organizations.

The fiesta in Mérida. The local press in the 80's notes in an explicit manner the dual character of the fiesta. Comments on them are made indistinctly in the sections called "Religious Life" and "Social Life".

The religious character of the fiesta is obvious since the explicit function of the gremios is worshipping the image. Despite that in many cases this character was discussed, the idea of the religious sense of the activities prevailed over the ludic character also attributed to the activities of the gremios as is shown in the following comment:

#### THE FIESTA OF THE SEÑOR DE LAS AMPOLLAS

The religious intolerance, many times, completely blind has censored the gremios of this capital for the profane fiestas and joy manifestations they do on the occasion of the popular fiesta of the Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas. If those censors made the purpose of discarding all fanaticism, all irrational intransigence, if they made the purpose of examining things with impartial criteria and serene spirit, instead of censure they would express praise; instead of asking the rejection of these manifestations, they would stimulate them for them to increase. This without being a Catholic neither religious, but only with being fond of all what means love to order and social relationships.

It is noticeable that there is not in this city any association which establishes relationships between our artisans; that they live all the year without

meeting the others or even seeing the others except when they reunite to agree the solemnities and diversions of the day corresponding to them during the fiesta. How is this reunion or conjunta realized? How are they carried out?

It is not a reunion for awakening base passions nor to provoke hate or rivalry.

In the conjunta it is agreed that each member of the gremio contributes, with anything implying no sacrifice, for financing the attractions of the following year. What is immoral about this? Does any artisan take the food off his family for giving it to the fiesta? No. They contribute without thinking about it. They never have to complain about a deceit neither about their money being used for other purposes.

Which are the profane celebrations? music, fireworks, illumination of the square of the Independence and use of rockets. Each gremio attempts to make it better than the other, but are the celebrations of this fiesta not the better of all public celebrations? May the censors say.

Very noticeable is that this fiesta enhances the moral of the community. Why is the gun-powder burnt a misdeed? where is the misdeed, in the money spent or in the noise they make? The most cult countries used to solemnize their fiestas with artillery fires.

So therefore let's hope the gremios are always gaily united through Religion! (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, October 6, 1891. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

The conception as "Social Life" is manifested in several ways. We will present three of them:

On September 27 began the fiesta made in his honor and ends on October 15 with the cerrada of the church.

This fiesta is one of those celebrated most pompously and with feverish enthusiasm, it is truly abundant what is done forenhancing it.

The Cathedral overflows: a large audience goes to see the entrada and salida of the gremios passing in procession with hundreds of lit candles and waving their banners on which are highlighted, with golden letters, the name of the gremio and the image of the Cristo de las Ampollas.

. . . reunited there is the cream of the society, wearing colorful and elegant outfits, in contact with the middle and popular classes. (HJMPS, Crónica Yucateca, 1904, No. 11. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)



The social and religious senses of the fiesta were also noted explicitly:

All Mérida, not saying all of Yucatán, awaits with anxiety the coming of the traditional fiesta of the Señor de las Ampollas.

Many people and families because of the devotion they have to the Cristo burnt in Ichmul, but others rather to show off in the masses, retretas and other celebrations typical of this fiesta.

The square of the independence looks those days as a real gold square. (HJMPS, Crónica Yucateca, 1905, No. 28. Free translation from the Spanish)

The fiesta did not only have repercussions in religious questions but also on the fashion and forms of enjoyment also being an important moment for impelling the selling of certain products:

#### THE GREAT FIESTA:

##### OF THE SANTISIMO CRISTO DE LAS AMPOLLAS

Is forthcoming and for the gremios there are prepared 1000 candles of pure wax and 200 hachas which will enhance the altar and that will be hired at a very low price in the kiosk. (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, September 23, 1885. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

#### TO THE FIESTEROS

- Are you an ironmonger?
- No, Sir.
- A carpenter?
- No, Sir.
- A merchant?
- No, Sir.

Well, it is of very little importance for my object if you want, in these days be on competition in novelties and animation with the gremios celebrating the fiesta of the Señor de las Ampollas you can come to "La Oriental" of Sixto Escalante where you will find an excellent variety of paper balloons, all in fancy shapes and at a price lower than the reduced prices. (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, October 1, 1891. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

The third aspect we present here refers to the great movement noticeable in the city and to the necessity the

authorities had to maintain the public order during the celebrations:

THE FIESTA OF THE SEÑOR DE LAS AMPOLLAS

We are writing in the moments in which the city of Mérida is devoted with most enthusiasm to public enjoyment.

In the middle of this joy, there is no extralimitation, no prostitution, no degradation.

The gremios of workers become, in days like these, real fraternities and to rise their voices they do not need getting drunk.

25 police agent looks, day and night, after this city that already has 40,000 inhabitants.

The government should be satisfied of the practical results of the Catholic beliefs and persuaded that it will never have governed more loyal than these. (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, October 9, 1885. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

Thus, in the social life of Mérida at the end of the 19th century, the fiesta of the Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas had a prominent role in terms of the public expression of Catholic devotion of different social classes and groups. At the same time, it was one of the most important ludic events of the city. During the socialist governments the celebrations of the Cristo de las Ampollas were strongly watched over and control, situation that ended with the period known as Revolucion Cristera in 1936.

Hunucma

In contrast with the fiesta of Mérida the historical references to the Hunucma fiestas are quite scarce and therefore the concrete characteristics which the fiesta has cannot be completely established. The earliest documented dates which can be found are from the last century specifically, 1873, when the arrangement of social balls,

with orchestra, in the Yucatecan capital and bullfights during the fiesta in honor of the Virgin of the Assumption were recorded (HJMPS, Crónica Local, January 31, 1873).

Regarding the last quarter of the last century, it is important to note that in addition to the fiesta of the Virgin of Tetiz, two other fiestas had a place in Hunucma, one dedicated to the Señor de Sisal and the other called the Fiesta del Cabo de Santiago that used to take place during his respective patron saint day.

Like the first mentioned fiesta, both of these included bullfights, dances and vaquerías, but of these last two it is important to note that in neither of them, either in that year or any of the following, is there mention of the participation of gremios, something which does not apply in the case of the Virgin of Tetiz, where the gremios form an important part of the sacred space of the fiesta.

The same fiesta today has been integrated in two spheres or spaces; the profane and the sacred. The historical documents of the fiesta place more emphasis on the profane space for the simple reason that it is this which attracts more people. Similarly, historic documents include, as in the case of Mérida, important announcements which reveal the importance which the fiesta has at a state level.

The sphere or space of the profane is in the hand of the Junta de Mejoras Materiales, formerly known as the Junta

de Mejoramiento Moral, Cívico y Material. This assembly meets prior to the execution of the fiesta to decide which tasks need to be performed to bring the fiesta to a good conclusion. Among the matters discussed are the organization of the dances and bullfights and the disposition of the profits of the fiesta. Like the Junta de Mejoramiento, it ensures that the community will benefit with material works from the municipal earnings attributable to the fiesta.

Originally the fiesta began, with a remate (bargain), auctioned to the fiesteros who were in charge of implementing all the preparations for the profane fiesta.

Since 1929 the dances have taken place in the Eulogio Rosado market or from time to time in the corridors of the municipal palace.

The bullfights have been held in the town center, on the north side of the church. For the traditional dance, the vaquería, it was necessary to have an initial meeting with the vaqueras, a banquet, before finalizing the details of the dance which would open the profane festivities. The religious side included the bringing of the Virgin, the entrada of the gremios into the church, etc. These have all had their place fixed for many years.

Another important aspect of the fiesta was the installation of carnival rides, specifically the arrival at the town of the apparatus of the entrepreneurs Cáceres and Ordoñez. At the same time that they were installed in the

main square, separate stalls with games of chance to entertain passers-by from both the neighboring municipios and the capital of the State.

For the installation of these stalls the municipio also charged the proprietors. In 1930 the governor of the State, Bartolomé García Correa helped at the vaquería and at the same time ordered that the games of chance be suspended and that the Junta de Mejoras return to the stall holders the money that they had already paid. Despite these dispositions on the part of the governor it seems that in later years the practice of gambling returned to being a part of the profane fiesta and in 1945 we find another note which emphasizes that by presidential order the setting up of stalls for games of chance was not permitted.

Although infrequent, the visits of governors (in 1938 and 1952 others were made) reveals that during the decade of the 30's the fiesta of Hunucma had a greater importance at a regional level than it does today. In the advertisements for the fiesta and for the transport necessary to bring in passers-by the owners did not hesitate to put their names and those of their wives on their own advertisements. They thought that the fiesta was not only an event for the popular classes but also for the upper classes of the town and of Mérida. It should not be forgotten that many Mérida residents were owners of haciendas in this region and their participation in this type of event was important for their

name and prestige and of course to maintain cordial relationships with their workers.

In celebrating the fiesta, the image which the town presented to visitors was very important and so the townspeople made efforts, the goal of which was to be better regarded by the visitors. At the end of the fiesta the Junta de Mejoras should offer a detailed report of the profits obtained by the fiesta and also show how these were employed. In relation to the fiesta profits and their later destiny we have the following information:

1942. \$ 618.75. For the embellishment of the main square.

1944. \$ 1,832.00

1945. \$ 2,250.00. Apportioned for the construction of a school house.

1946. \$ 2,155.87

1947. More than \$ 3,000.00

1955. \$ 5,000.00. (Earnings from the remate of the fiesta).<sup>17</sup>

As has been mentioned, the religious fiesta began much earlier than the profane fiesta. For the start of the latter a commission was sent from Hunucma to Tetiz with the object of asking for authorization to take the image to the first town; among the commission would be found the municipal

---

<sup>17</sup> It is important to point out here that although the fiesta was allocated by remate for \$ 5,000.00, the fiesteros only paid the quantity of \$ 2,897.00.

authorities. Once a time was arranged for the movement of the image, a dance would be held in Tetiz to celebrate the agreement.

The image was transferred with a multitudinous procession included people from many parts of the State. The local press reported the day on which the transfer was made almost every year and the number of participants was certainly never less than a thousand people: music and the saying of the rosary were part of the procession. The arrival of the Virgin in procession caused a great stir among the inhabitants of that community and was received with a bronceo. In 1955 the procession took on a greater brilliance and during its passage, devotees even carried two airplanes of flowers and multicolored paper.

The acts of petition to the Virgin of Tetiz did not always produce good results. From 1943 to 1946 the image was not taken to Hunucma and it was not until 1947 that the tradition continued. In fact a Priest who was this period allocated to the parish was pleased to re-initiate the tradition, saying "these religious exchanges bring together the communities socially and spiritually" (BCRM, Diario de Yucatán, January 22, 1947).

Starting from 1951, the Church began to organize a church fair in the porch of the church each time that the Virgin was taken to the main church of the parish and so the Church began to administer in a direct manner the economic

benefits that the transfer of the Virgin represented to the population.

Information about the internal organization of the gremios, the second most important participant in the profane fiesta, cannot be obtained from newspaper archives. In fact, they only mention the name of some of the gremios which took part in the fiesta. Those mentioned with most frequency in the first seventy years of this century are the following:

Gremio of Maiden Ladies

Gremio of Ladies

Gremio of Musicians

Gremio of Butchers

Gremio of Coal Merchants

Gremio of Parcel Holders

Gremio of Carretilleros

Gremio of Farm Workers

Gremio of Artisans

In relation to the presidency of the gremios it has been possible to establish that the presidents of the gremios remained in charge for several years. The social participation of the gremios was, compared to those of Mérida in the turn of the century, relatively scarce.

A tragedy occurred in 1955 during one of the bullfights of the fiesta. When fifteen people died and 100 were hurt. As a result the gremios of Suppliers and of Carretilleros



contributed with money to help with the care of their relatives.

The activities that the gremios used to carry out do not seem to have changed since they entered the church and left it the following day and paid for the mass and the rosary. In addition, they realized conjuntas in the houses of the members of the board of the gremio.

### Tetiz

Historical information about the fiesta of Tetiz is lacking and does not show important variations from that of Hunucma, therefore we will only present some important variations in terms of organization.

One of them comes from 1888. There is a mention of the possibility of repeating the vaquería of the beginning of the fiesta the following day at midday.

It is also stated that the vaqueras used to distribute Pul-Keven (a kind of corn drink) among those attending the vaquería (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, August 4, 1891). In 1929, a general conjunta took place in order to organize what at the time was called the "fiesta of August". What is rare of this situation is that the formation of the conjunta was not, it seems, for carrying out the tasks of the gremio but of all the fiesta, which included profane activities that were not linked to any gremio. At the same time, it is possible to note that municipal authorities took part of the conjunta. Therefore it can be said that at the time and

despite the political and religious problems of the country and of Mérida, there was no conflict at community level between the ecclesiastic and religious authorities (Suárez 1979:1253-1263).

The compulsory character of the participation of the citizens in the fiesta was an obligation with the community itself, so the community as a whole acted in the fiesta:

THE CONJUNTA OF THE FIESTA OF AUGUST.- Yesterday, with the presence of a large number of neighbors, presided by Deputy Francisco Canto C. and Eleano Canché and Pedro Cepeda A., president of the Town Council and of the Liga in presence of the delegate of the Liga Central, Mr. Lewis H., took place the election of the board who will be in charge of the tasks for the fiesta that will be celebrated in August; being elected as president, secretary and treasurer respectively Francisco Canto C., Juventino Canto L., and this writer; and as vocals Pedro Cepeda A., Bartolomé Balam and Nicolás Cuytun. The board agreed, following Mr. Canche's proposal, that every neighbor over the age of majority and who were not disabled or living in extreme poverty will contribute with two pesos within two months. Spontaneously, Mr. Lewis put on the hands of the treasurer this amount saying that he was doing it voluntarily and with joy. (BCRM, Diario de Yucatán, May 23, 1929. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

The participation of the community of Tetiz was wide as well during the third decade of this century. Due to the fiesta the inhabitants of Tetiz got into the habit of painting the facades of their houses.

The announcements of the fiesta of Tetiz published in the press were very few. One of them mentions the activities that the Gremio "La Gloriosa Asunción de María Inmaculada" of Tetiz should carry out. In general, they differ from those reported for Mérida and Hunucma.

As in Hunucma and Mérida there was also a committee of improvement of the church which was in charge of improving the temple for it to be enlightened during the fiesta.

Pilgrimages from Hunucma to Tetiz are also reported as well as the visit of the delegation of a gremio from Oxkutzcab in 1947. Comments related to the results of the fiesta were also given.

#### TETIZ

FIESTA- Yesterday ended the one celebrated every year in this community to honor the Virgen de la Asunción. The gremios were very animated and the ceremonies in the church very crowded and also attended by the faithful from elsewhere who came expressly to visit the Virgin.

The profane fiesta was also crowded filling the ballroom. On Saturday it was so overcrowded that the public did not have enough space. On the Sunday bullfight the seats and the bullring were completely crowded. The fiesta was joyful without any incident to lament. (BCRM, Diario de Yucatán, August 20, 1952. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

These events show some of the features the fiesta still has today.

#### Sisal

Despite the fact that the fiesta of Sisal is new compared to the previous three (it has existed for a little more than thirty years), it is known that, in 1874, the patronal fiesta of Sisal was dedicated to its patron Saint San Pedro González Telmo, that it was celebrated from May 2-11 and that there were vaquerías, bullfights and balls.

It can be said that the extinction of this fiesta is related to the move of the Customs Office from Sisal to the

port of Progreso. This is supported by the following comment of the local press referred to the fiesta of Sisal.

The functions of the church will start on the third and will be the most honorably possible given the circumstances lived by Sisal.

(BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, April 30, 1874. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish)

For the fiesta of Hunucma a similar situation is found since there is also a mention of the moving of the Customs Office event:

In spite of the decay felt in this village, due to the moving of the customs office from Sisal to Progreso, which so much life used to give to trade, the neighbors who always attempt to preserve the life of the community, have proposed themselves, this time with more enthusiasm, the annual fiesta of the Virgin of Tetiz. (BCRM, La Revista de Mérida, January 31, 1873. Free translation from the Spanish)

This panorama seems to point, more clearly than on the previous cases, towards a close relationship between the socioeconomic situation of the community and the existence and modalities of a patronal fiesta.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONTEMPORARY PATRONAL FIESTAS

Several times in the previous pages it has been stated that there is a basic distinction within Yucatecan patronal fiestas, that is, its division into two spheres or aspects: sacred and profane.

This chapter deals specifically with both the organizational instances and the main characteristics of the two of them.

Representing the sacred aspect, the priest and two laical groups, the cargadores and the gremios are the effective contributors towards the organization of the fiesta.

In its profane aspect, the fiesta is organized by the fiesteros through the auction of the fiesta. Also common is the organization of a fair (commercial of crafts or industrial) within the fiesta, although this is not an intrinsic attribute.

This chapter describes as well the place of the fiestas in the public religious celebrations cycle and the question of the circulation of images throughout the region. Both issues are important to determine the importance of the images in the parish.

### The Church

As has been said previously one of the agents which significantly contributes to the execution of a patronal fiesta is the Church.

The levels of participation of the Church are directly related to the integration of the priest within the community, but especially with his perception of this kind of popular religiosity. In other words, the priest's participation will be minimal if he does not consider patronal fiestas an adequate mechanism for the expression and canalization of religious practices. This could be because of their irreverence, their lack of seriousness in dealing with religious matters, their being a pretext for enjoyment, or simply because he does not believe they are the right road to God.

On the contrary, if the priest believes that patronal fiestas are a good, although not the best way, to get close to the Church and to God, then his participation and that of the Church will be a lot greater.

I was unable to find the organization of a contemporary patronal fiesta without the direct participation of the Church, but this does not mean that we can talk about patronal fiestas (sacred and profane) without the organized participation of other groups from the communities where they take place. In other words, the participation of the Church is a necessary condition for the realization of the

fiesta. Nevertheless, this participation is, at the same time, a double sense obligation. On one side, the parishes, and particularly the priests in charge of the parish, have to fulfill a calendar of activities according to ecclesiastic dispositions. These necessarily include the celebration of particular fiestas every year. On the other hand, the Church is committed to participate actively in the tasks organized by the community for celebrating the fiesta.

In this sense, the presence of the Church in the patronal fiesta and its tolerance or sympathy regarding the particular forms of celebration of each community cannot be exclusively understood as a concession from this institution. It has to be conceived as part of a frame of continuous dispute over various spaces of action for each one of the instances or groups which take part in the patronal fiesta. Thus, it can be placed between the official religion-popular religion opposition.

The participation of the Church in a fiesta is important not only as far as ecclesiastic work is concerned, but also because it receives economic benefits, directly reflected in its income. It also may include the possibility of growing as a Church or even as a parish.

The Church works directly with the groups that take part in the patronal fiesta. But, often, it also organizes, directly or through the laical groups working with it, some activities which tend to generate economic benefits for the

Institution. For example, in Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal (communities belonging to the same parish) it can be noted that the Church works through the parish priest, directly with three groups involved in the fiesta: The Legion of Mary, the cargadores and the gremios.

The Legion of Mary is an organization created in each place in order to carry out evangelization work within the communities all year round. It brings together women who, during the fiesta, are in charge of tasks, including the organization of the rosaries said every night in the communities, the participation in the processions of the image in order to raise funds for the patron saint and the rest-home for the elderly, and the organization of charity fairs in the church grounds to raise funds for improving the parish churches.

With the cargadores, the tasks performed by the Church have to do with the custody of the images in question. Jointly with this group, the Church sets the times for the pilgrimages and processions with the images of the patron saint to which these people contribute. This kind of organization does not exist for the fiesta to the Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas of the Cathedral of Mérida for reasons which will be explained later. Finally, within the sacred space, the Church works with the gremios.

Through individual and collective meetings with them, the Church sets the activities that each of the gremios will



perform inside the church as well as the times and days in which the entrada and salida of each gremio will take place.

The participation of the Church in the fiesta, specifically in the organization of the sacred sphere, is also important for, as in the case of the parish of Hunucma, it has attempted to modify the festive ritual including some new activities which were not part of the fiesta. In other words, it pretends to officially sacralize some of the events of the fiesta. One of these intrusions which affected the organization of this celebration was the inclusion of daily processions with the image so that it visited the thirteen sectors into which the parish had divided the community. A similar situation is found in Tetiz and Sisal.

These processions, which are left in the hands of the Legion of Mary and the cargadores, seek to give the fiesta an official seal, but, at the same time, they reduce the real power of negotiation of the traditional organization of the fiesta in the sacred sphere: the gremio.

If a gradation of the dependence of these three types of organizations in relation to the Church is done, it will be as follows: total dependence, The Legion of Mary; relative independence, the cargadores; complete independence, the gremios. An increase in the participation of the organizations emanating from the church such as The Legion of Mary, obviously means an increase in the control

of the church over, at least, the sacred aspect of the fiesta.

Another important innovation in the processions has to do with the music. The said processions are not accompanied by the traditional Yucatecan orchestra, the charanga, but by religious music recorded by the chorus of the church. With this the Church attempts once more to expand its field of action during the time of the fiesta.

The range of intervention by the Church in the organization of fiestas is radically different in the fiestas of the Cathedral of Mérida. This is so, because of, among other reasons, the character of the fiesta in a city like Mérida, where it shows a stronger sense of religious commitment, although enjoyment and entertainment are not absent.

The Church also has a connection with the profane activities from which it gets an important economic benefit. This is an indirect product of the commercialization that fiesteros and municipal authorities make of the images of the patron saints, during the time of the fiesta.

An agreement signed by the municipal authorities and the parish priest of Hunucma, to which the fiesteros committed themselves as well, is presented below in order to give a clear example of the benefits that the Church can get during the time of the fiesta: Council commit themselves to the following:

. . . the organizers of the fiesta and the Honorable Town Council commit themselves to the following:

1.- To leave the square and Municipal Hall clean and without the stands set up by locals and fiesteros.

2.- The Municipal Palace will safeguard order during the charity fair and the matinee. (salaries will be covered by the Honorable Town Council).

3.- The merry-go-round will have to pay \$ 500,000.00 to the church before it is set up. (the amount will be collect by the Honorable Town Council).

4.- Stands selling beer and those with live music will pay \$ 100,000.00 to the Church (which will be collected by the Honorable Town Council).

5.- The cleaning, and all the expenses related to it, of the square and Municipal Hall after the charity fair will be carried out by the Honorable Town Council.

6.- The car-park located on one side of the church will be controlled by the same.

7.- The parish will have the rights over the Monday of Carnival.

8.- To respect any commitments the parish may have with any brand of soft drinks. (HJMPS, Por Esto. Emphasis mine. Free translation from the Spanish. January 11, 1992)

It is necessary to note that this kind of agreement in which the Town Council, the fiesteros and the parish agree are not always given this way. This particular agreement came out in the context of an important conflict which took place in Hunucma during the period 1990-1992.<sup>1</sup>

The parish of Hunucma also gets an additional income for the selling of food, soft-drinks and beer at the charity fairs which usually take place in the grounds of the parish churches during the fiestas of each community.

As a result of these activities, and others promoted by the Church both inside and outside the fiesta, the previous parish priest built the chapels of Nohuayum and San Antonio

---

<sup>1</sup> For more details of this conflict, see Appendix.

Chel and refurbished those of Sisal and Texan of Palomeque. In one county town the Franciscan monastery in the parish of Saint Francis of Asis was totally refurbished and a new chapel for the Virgin of Guadalupe was built.

To the income that the Church might get from the profane activities carried out during the fiesta are added the less important amounts of money that it gets from the masses and rosaries that gremios pay so that to have them performed during the celebration of the fiesta.

In 1990 the the Cathedral of Mérida charged the gremios participating in the fiesta the following quantities:

<u>Entrada</u>	1 000
Rosary and Sermon	5 000
Preached Mass	5 000
Sung Mass	10 000
<u>Salida</u>	1 000
Lighting	1 000
Cleaning	1 000
5 employees (1000 each)	5 000
Bell ringer	1 000
Ornamentation	1 000
Administration	2 000
Minimum chant	50 000
Total	83 000

Unlike what happens in the parish of Hunucma, the Cathedral of Mérida does not get any income through the

profane activities of the fiesta. As was noted above the income comes from the services offered. Also, on the occasion of a fiesta, the gremios and people inside or outside them make donations to the Church, but there are never arrangements with the Town Council or any other kind of civil authority.

As will be seen later, this situation is due to the fact that in the fiesta of the Cathedral of Mérida the profane aspect is not clearly distinguishable from the sacred aspect. Even more, if we follow the idea that what the gremios do belongs to the sacred sphere of the fiesta, it can be said that the profane aspect is absent. Despite being the most important patronal fiesta of Mérida this is the case because the urban conditions and the population's growth which prevents the reunion of the community as a whole around a particular event.

Thus, a different participation in the fiestas of the parish of Hunucma and the Cathedral of Mérida can be easily observed. Where a fiesta acquires a character of collectivity and where its presence has a meaning for the population, the participation of the Church tends to increase beyond the space it has traditionally occupied during the time of fiesta.

But if a fiesta has been removed from the basic festive religious system of the community, the participation of the church is very low.

### The Cargadores

Less known in the organization of the festive structure of Yucatecan patronal fiestas is the group called cargadores. Apparently their presence is restricted to the western patron fiestas of Yucatán. This kind of organization can be found in the municipios of Hunucma, Tetiz, Kinchil, Samahil and Celestun, all of them in the area mentioned (see figure 2).

The group of cargadores is formed by people devoted to the image, with which they maintain a special relationship. In many cases, they are people who have received something conceived of as a miracle and their participation in the group begins by gratitude.

The internal organization of the cargadores comprises a board with the offices of president, secretary and treasurer. Although it seems to be autonomous, in fact the board works in co-ordination with the priest. The latter has a direct influence on the group since he sanctions the election of the president and, in many cases, organizes the program of activities with them.

In 1993 there was a change in the board of cargadores of Hunucma. The parish priest sanctioned the change and also defined the position, as consultant and adviser, that the former president was to have from then on. His removal from the post did not mean his exclusion from the group and even less his separation from its activities. Apparently his

resignation was due to his age which prevented him from fulfilling his obligations with the image and the people.

The basic task of the cargadores is the custody of the images during the time of fiesta. This involves both looking after their appearance and their belongings. Besides their clothes, the belongings of the images are their jewelry whose value, both in the cases of the Virgin of Tetiz and the Señor de Sisal, amount to several thousands of dollars.

Outside the time of fiesta the jewels of these images are kept in security boxes in Mérida and during the time of fiesta they are worn by the images only in the processions and pilgrimages. All the time they are not being used the cargadores take turns to keep them in their houses so that the general public do not know where they are. These actions need to be taken in order to avoid a robbery like the one suffered by the Virgin of Tetiz eight years ago in Hunucma, when her crown and jewels were stolen, which meant a great loss for the community.

Also the images are taken both within and outside their own parish to other chapels and parishes during other fiestas, not necessarily patronal fiestas. This is the case of the Virgin of Tetiz which is taken to Sisal during Holy Week. It is the cargadores who decide whether or not the image will visit another place and the organization of the visits is their responsibility. The group also makes arrangements with other groups of cargadores from different

parishes and chapels to assure there are guarantees and adequate methods of security for the image and its belongings in the places it visits.

The image cannot be moved without its jewels. Because of the high value of the jewels of the Virgin of Tetiz, on one occasion the cargadores of Sisal decided that the responsibility was too great for them. The image would have been denied to them unless they had committed themselves to take it together with the jewels.

Prior to the start of a fiesta, the group of cargadores visit the community to whom the image belongs to ask for it to be taken to the community where the celebration will take place. In the case of Hunucma, the cargadores go to Tetiz; the cargadores of the port of Sisal go to Hunucma for their patronal fiesta in August, to Tetiz for the visit of the Virgin of Tetiz during Holy Week, and to San Antonio Chel for the permanence of the Virgin of Chel during October of every year.

In fact, both of the fiestas of Hunucma and Sisal begin with a pilgrimage by which the image is moved to the community where the fiesta will take place.

During the transfers and the internal movements the images make in the communities or, in other words, in the pilgrimages and processions in which the images of the patron saints participate, the cargadores are the ones who, will carry the image on its baldachin, either throughout the



course of the pilgrimage or procession or during some parts of it.

In the case of the fiesta of Hunucma the image is carried on the back by the cargadores throughout the course, approximately nine kilometers, which runs from leaving Tetiz to arriving the entrance of the church of Hunucma. In the case of Sisal, the image of the Señor de Sisal is carried by the cargadores to the junction of the Hunucma road with the main road to Sisal and then it is carried in an open vehicle.

In general, it can be said that, at least during the pilgrimages and processions, the images have to be carried by the cargadores.

The group of cargadores is divided into two categories according to the height of each member. There is a group of short people and a group of tall people so that there are no problems for balancing the baldachin while carrying the image. Within the organization of the group of cargadores there used to be a persona whose function was the custody of the hats of the cargadores but this no longer exists. The use of hats has disappeared to a great extent, due to the transformations in the dressing habits of the male population.

As stated by the cargadores themselves, the purposes of the visits are those of "evangelization" and of raising funds to benefit the parish. The groups responsibility for

custody of the image includes the periods in which the image is inside the church. Then each of the cargadores visits the church, in turns, in order to look after the expensive ornaments which enhance and embellish the image.

In terms of its social formation, the group is heterogeneous, but it has a marked tendency for the members to be from the subordinate classes. The group of cargadores does not include women; it is a task associated with the men. It is considered a masculine task given the weight of the images and the exhausting courses. Nevertheless, on some occasions a girl or a woman has asked to carry the image during a part of the course of a pilgrimage or procession and this has been granted.

Besides formally belonging to a group, to take part in the pilgrimages and processions it is necessary to be "well dressed, not to wear short trousers or be drunk despite the fiesta.

The participation of a devotee of the image who does not belong to the community is also permitted. In the specific case of the fiesta of Hunucma, the movements of the image are made from a center (Tetiz) considered a sanctuary. A great number of people are attracted to the pilgrimages. These people come to the beginning of the fiesta willing to participate actively and achieve a closeness to the Virgin by directly carrying the baldachin with the image. The part of women in the pilgrimage from Tetiz to Hunucma

and viceversa is basically to accompany the image. However, a group of women volunteers are in charge of carrying the belongings, clothes and jewelry of the Virgin in an enormous chest.

It is interesting to note here that the women are in charge of changing the clothes of the Virgin of Tetiz and leave the cargadores out, but the men are in charge of changing the shrouds of the Señor de Sisal during the fiesta, so the task is in the hands of the cargadores.

Participating in the group of cargadores also means spending a certain amount of money for carrying the images. This money comes from personal contributions made by the cargadores which can be either in cash or goods. They, on many occasions provide the vehicles in which the image will be carried and also cover the expenses for the sound equipment necessary to play the music produced by the church and used during the pilgrimages and processions.

This kind of organization of the groups of cargadores of Hunucma and Tetiz does not exist in Mérida. During the fiesta of the Santísimo Cristo de las Ampollas the image is sheltered by the church itself and the changing of shrouds and general care of the image and its belongings is in the hands of those people who work in the Cathedral.

There are only three processions of the Cristo de las Ampollas and all of them take place inside the church. During these processions the presidents or other members of

the gremios are in charge of carrying the image on their backs. In 1992 and 1993, because of recent changes in Article 130 of the Mexican Constitution, which now recognizes Churches legally. At the end of the fiesta, there was a great procession in which all the gremios of the fiesta took part and the image was paraded in the center of town around the main square.

Despite the fact that similar actions have been carried out in the communities, the control of the Church over its goods, specifically over the image, is perfectly clear in Mérida.

#### The Gremios

Of all the organizations participating in Yucatecan patronal fiestas, the gremios are the best known. In fact, almost every patronal fiesta necessarily includes gremios which are also present in many events apart from patronal fiestas (Quintal 1993).

Within the religious field of Yucatán, the term gremio refers to the organizations in charge of the realization of a good part of the activities of the sacred space of the fiesta.

The tasks of the gremios are basically directed to the celebration of certain religious events which are directly related to the population, the Catholic Liturgy or to similar celebrations in other places. The essential function of the gremios competes with the organization of the sacred

outside them since their basic task consists of organizing the activities of devotion and honor to the image of the fiesta, that is, they participate in the chanalization of the religious expressions of the community.

However, the main difference existing between the gremios and the organizations emanating from the Catholic Church has to do with their tight relationship with the groups that form the social panorama of the communities and, of course, with a historical, organized form for relating to a particular image, to a specific form of celebrating anchored for many years in the religious history of Yucatán.

The number of gremios that take part in the different fiestas studied here as well as the reasons for their creation are varied. At the beginning, as has been noted in the section regarding the history of the fiestas, their creation corresponded to an ecclesiastic policy generated by the Bishopric. Later, and in a way independent from the Church, gremios were and are created in order to fulfill within the community where they are found, promises made to specific patron saints. Both the ecclesiastic policy and the laity will have unified different groups of the population with common characteristics.

The feature which was, and still is, used to bind Catholic groups in gremios is basically, the activity, occupation or trade, such as the gremios of Painters, Carpenters, etc. Similarly, certain conditions of life were

considered and thus gremios such as the ones of Ladies and Young Ladies were formed. Later, gremios were included which simply bound together a group of devotees who organized themselves as a gremio. They took their name from a characteristic which identified them with any Catholic feeling or practice as in the case of the gremio of faith, hope and charity.

Gremios have a calendar of activities usually covering all the year since, when they are not celebrating the fiesta, they are organizing it or participating, through delegations, in other fiestas they have contact with. This situation is not general for all the gremios since, as will be seen later, the relationships with other associations of this kind may produce conflict, due to breach of promise, that in many cases the gremios want to avoid.

The internal organization of these associations retains the same basic structure they had last century. It has a president, a secretary and a treasurer, These posts can be occupied either by men and women. However, it is not very common to have a female president in a gremio of office; this situation is only found in the cases of the gremios of Female Vegetable Sellers and Dressmakers from Mérida and of Female Vegetable Sellers of Hunucma.

The duration of the post is one year although it frequently becomes longer. The election of the board is by consensus: a person can ask for the gremio or it can be

offered to them which is nothing other than asking for or accepting the presidency of the gremio. There are no restrictions to becoming president. The only requirement is the commitment to work adequately with all the members of the gremio and to satisfactorily accomplish the activities organized by the gremio during the fiesta. Nevertheless, the persons's background is taken into account since this can be an important reason for rejection.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the functions of each post of the board, they are not restrictive, that is, the functions are not sufficiently delineated as to give certain people the exclusivity of certain activities.

Outside the board of the gremio, as in the last century, there is a post called recaudador although its functions can be fulfilled by any member of the board.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it is important to note that, despite the fact that they do not occupy a post, the participation of the families of both the members of the board and of the associates is basic for carrying out certain activities. For example, the wife or the daughters of the president of the gremio or of any other member of the board will be in charge

---

<sup>2</sup> In some cases, as in the gremio of Farm Workers of Hunucma besides the proven responsibility of the person who will become president of the gremio, the location of their address is taken into account since every year the gremio has to leave from different cardinal points, so that, every three years the gremio leaves from the same cardinal point.

<sup>3</sup> The function of the recaudador is to collect the money for the gremio.

of organizing the preparation of the meal which will be offered during the conjunta and to the members of the delegations that each gremio hosts.

The sons also co-operate for the celebration, performing activities considered too tough for women or other activities corresponding to their gender.

Even though the gremios show a tight relationship with certain occupations, they are not exclusive at all. On the contrary, all those people who want to cooperate with them are welcomed. In particular the blood relatives and the in-laws of both the members of the board and the associates are well caned. Neighborhood bonds also contribute to the participation in the gremios.

Participation in the gremial organization is voluntary but it is not promoted by the Church as a religious activity. Participation in the gremios is registered on the invitations. Invitations are not always extended although usually there is a balance book in which the agreements made during the meetings prior to the fiesta and during the conjunta are also registered. At the same time the book will be read during the conjunta for the gremieros to know in advance what money was expended.

When gremios issue invitations for the fiesta, these generally include: 1. the name of the gremio, 2. the date of its creations, 3. the names of the persons of the board and of the associates, 4. the program of activities and the



dates in which they will take place, 5. a photograph or picture of the worshiped image, and 6. the list of the delegations with which the gremio has a relationship.

An invitation is not only to announce the fiesta and specifically the participation of such and such a gremio, but it also is the document given to all those who contributed to covering the expenses of the gremio. In many cases, as in those of the gremios of Glass-Makers, Mirror-Makers and Aluminum-Workers and Painters from Mérida, the invitations also include those people who contributed large amounts of money. Usually they do not conduct the same trade, but have working relationships with them; these people are called "honorary members" in the invitations.

The organization of the activities of the gremios during the 24 hours corresponding to them during the fiesta involve activities both inside and outside the church. For these activities to take place adequately it is necessary to have meetings during the year in order to find resources and to distribute tasks. Special attention is given to financial sources, of which the most important are 1) the contribution, fixed annually, of all the members of gremios;<sup>4</sup> 2) extraordinary donations of money either from members of the community or office or from people who, although not being in the same office, also make important

---

<sup>4</sup> Any person who agrees to pay the contribution fixed in the meetings becomes a member of the gremio.

contributions; 3) a collection, an activity which means going from house to house begging on behalf of the Virgin; 4) products, such as hens, turkeys, corn, firewood, etc.; and 5) labor: helping the gremio to receive all the attendants, besides preparing the meal.<sup>5</sup>

Inside the church, activities are limited to the attendance to the masses and processions and to ornamenting the altar with flowers.

In the grounds of the church cipreces<sup>6</sup> and voladores (rockets) are burnt.

Most activities take place outside the church and involve the preparation of food, drink for suppers, breakfasts and the conjunta as well as the organization of the processions and the hire of the gremio musicians, or charanga, among others.

The meal is usually a Yucatecan dish made with pork or poultry. Generally the dish served is relleno negro, a dish

---

<sup>5</sup> Although it is not general for all the gremios, the Gremio of Farm Workers of Hunucma has acquired over many years, some goods such as chairs, tables, metal containers, buckets, etc. which they rent during the year for weddings or special 15th birthday celebrations in order to raise funds for the celebration of the fiesta. In this way, they do not have problems because of default by any member of the gremio or extraordinary associate. Another way of raising funds, although less frequent, is selling beer, the only product commercialized during the conjuntas.

<sup>6</sup> Ciprés is the name given to some fireworks made of a structure of wood of the same material to which cartridges of gun-powder are added. When burnt they produce a visual effect of different colors. In Central Mexico, they are known as castillos.

made with pork and turkey cooked in a sauce made of burnt chillis. For breakfast tamales are served, filled with pork meat spiced with achiote. On all occasions, meals are served with a rice drink, horchata.

Gremios also have some objects whose presence is indispensable for the processions and which, at the same time, are the identifying element of the gremio in the community. The number of objects may vary, but there are some that are always present. These are: 1. banners,<sup>7</sup> 2. pabellones,<sup>8</sup> 3. little flags and, in the cases of Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal, ramillete.<sup>9</sup> The number of these objects varies from gremio to gremio. Every year the older ones are discarded but usually another one is added due to the

---

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note here the differences between the features of the majority of the banners of the gremios of the fiesta of the Santo Cristo de las Ampollas of Mérida and the ones of other parts of the State. Although the banners in general proclaim the same things (date of creation of the gremio, worshiped image and name of the gremio) the designs are radically different. In Mérida, the banners are of strong colors, usually wine red or blue, ornamented with golden thread forming leaves of different shapes and sizes. In the case of the banners of the gremios of the communities and the gremio of female vegetable sellers of Mérida the ornaments of the banners are made with patterns similar to those of the huipiles (the traditional dress of the Maya-mestizo-woman), so they are brightly colored.

<sup>8</sup> The pabellones are flags of the same colors as the Mexican National flag. However, in the center, the Mexican National Symbol is replaced by embroideries referring to the trade of the gremio. In other cases they only proclaim the name of the gremio and the worshiped image.

<sup>9</sup> The ramillete is a staff on whose tip a sort of plant-pot with flowers and leaves has been placed. Tied to the tip are straps of material of different colors.

promises made by some associate of the gremio. Thus, in some cases, banners proclaim the name of the donor person or family.

The gremios store away these objects with special care since they are considered sacred and of common property and therefore are listed in the balance book.

The processions take place in the streets of the community. They are begun by the people with the greatest experience of the fiesta and who do not necessarily have to belong to the board. The procession has a special order for the disposition of the goods of the gremio and of the people participating in it. First, leading the march and announcing the entrada or salida of the gremio, are the youngsters in charge of burning the voladores. Following them come two rows of male and female children who carry the little flags. Next come the women carrying flowers or candles. Then the procession becomes a single file of people carrying the ramillete, the banners of the gremio and the delegations and the pabellones of the gremio and of the delegations. Afterwards come the general public participating in the procession but without carrying any of the belongings of the gremio. Finally come the musicians of the gremio.

An element recently introduced in some of the processions of the gremios is the music of mariachís. However, its presence does not involve the absence of the charanga or music of the gremio.

It is also common that other objects are carried during the processions of the gremios as identifying elements: the Gremio of Female Vegetable Sellers carry vegetables; the one of Farm Workers and Peasants, corn plants; the one of Rail-waymen, a scale model of an engine.

Dress is important during the processions. The correct dress for women is the terno, even though not all of them wear it and they try to wear it, during the processions even when they do not wear huipiles daily. In other words, the procession becomes a way of collective expression of the ethnic identity, a collective social identity expressed in a positive way.

In the fiesta of Mérida it is also common to dress the children participating in the procession with clothes representative of the trade. Thus, the children of the bakers will be dressed in white and with all the instruments of the trade and the same will be done with the children of the railwaymen. In this context a particular occupational identity is expressed and reinforced.

Tied to these expressions of identities is the so-called dance of the Cabeza de Cochino.<sup>10</sup> This dance is performed in the grounds of the church or in the house of

---

<sup>10</sup> This dance is a jarana, in which a man places on his head a tray with a cooked pig's head. The pig's head is ornated with colored paper and a piece of bread inside its mouth. The bailadores (dancers) wear the traditional dress (see Hervik 1991).

the president of the gremio. Although it is considered as an integral part of the fiesta, not all the gremios perform it.

The socioeconomic composition of the gremios of all the fiestas studied is important because not only does it reveal the participation of different sectors of population in the fiesta but also explains the characteristics that the fiesta expresses in terms of the modalities adopted and the role they play within the community. For these reasons the following paragraphs are a proposal for reflection on this aspect.

Mérida. Nowadays 20 gremios participate in the fiesta of the Santo Cristo de las Ampollas. They are in charge of the celebrations which take place every year from September 27 to October 17. The activities carried out by the gremios during their day of fiesta are the following: procession of entrada of the gremio (12 im),<sup>11</sup> rosary (6 pm), firework display (8 pm), masses the following morning (6 and 11:15 am), procession of salida of the gremio and conjunta.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> In the case of the fiesta of Cristo de las Ampollas, it is important to distinguish two types of procession of entrada; those which take place within the church and those which take place outside. The latter are less common, but they are always present in gremios like that of the Stall Holders of the new town market, whose members are reproducing in the city the models of the villages as they are in large part, of rural extraction, or are still living in their places or origin.

<sup>12</sup> Not all the activities mentioned here are performed by the gremios, as some require large investments of money and in some cases the gremio cannot muster sufficient money to sustain all the expenses. Specifically, the firework

The list of the gremios of the Cathedral of Mérida is as follows:

1. Gremio of Master Builders
2. Gremio of Ropemakers
3. Gremio of Workers of Henequen and Similar
4. Gremio of Glass-Makers, Mirror-Makers and Aluminum-Workers
5. Gremio of Shoemakers
6. Gremio of Dress Makers and Embroiderers
7. Gremio of Taxi Drivers
8. Gremio of Painters
9. Gremio of Casters, Ironmongers and Mechanics
10. Gremio of Carpenters
11. Gremio of Ladies
12. Gremio of Tradesmen and Hacendados
13. Gremio of Suppliers
14. Gremio of Commerce Workers
15. Gremio of Professionals and Students
16. Gremio of Bakers
17. Gremio of Railwaymen
18. Gremio of Secondhand Dealers
19. Gremio of Bus Drivers
20. Gremio of Stall Holders in the new town market. Three different branches.

---

displays are one of the most difficult duties to fund.

Hypothetically it could be said that the number of gremios, surpassing by the ones which took part in the early stages of the fiesta, as well as the trades which today group the participating is closely related to the changing dynamics observed in the society of Mérida. This has produced not only the incorporation of certain trades but also specific models of consumption. It is possible to understand, for example, the disappearance of the Gremio of Barbers (because of the new beauty parlors), the Gremio of Ramoneros (because of the lesser demand of the plant of ramón to feed the cattle), the Gremio of Tin Workers (because of the disappearance of craft workshops due to the competition with factories). At the same time it is possible to understand the creation of the gremios of Stall Holders in the new town market better known as the Gremio of Female Vegetable Sellers (because of the migratory movements to the town where migrants become part of the services sector and the Gremio of Glass-Makers, Mirror-Makers and Aluminum- workers (because of the increasing demand of these products due to a growth in the market created by the building of new residential areas) which began taking part in the fiesta in 1988.

However it should not be left unsaid that the reflection of the social structure in the fiesta does not occur mechanically. There are still gremios whose existence has nothing to do with the occupational market any more.



That is the case of the gremios of Ropemakers and Henequen Workers. In both cases the source of work has been lost. The same applies to the Gremio of Hacendados; the hacienda henequenera or henequen plantation owners does not exist any more.

The mechanisms for continuing each gremio have varied significantly not in terms of the activities themselves but of the internal relationships within the group. Thus, the significant role that the bakers used to have in the fiestas of the Cathedral by donating part of their salaries for the fiesta has been greatly reduced. There are no socially compelling mechanisms for contributing money any more. The former master bakers and bakers have become owners of bakeries and they still contribute the amounts of money necessary to fulfill the obligations of the fiesta. In this sense, it can be stated that in this case there was an ascendent mobility which did not discard the application to their occupational and class origin, the latter being expressed by participating in the fiesta as a group linked to a particular trade. In other words, according to the scheme of Ossowski (1974), we can see an ascent in the simple gradation that did not change the synthetic gradation of the group.

Another important element to note is consumption of the fiesta. In this sense, it can be said that the presence of various sectors in the fiesta of the Cathedral allows us to

point out that the fiesta is produced, culturally speaking, by diverse sectors including all social classes. Nevertheless, the consumption of the fiesta is different, it is not consumed in the same manner by all the participants of the gremios.

For gremios such as those of Tradesmen and Hacendados, as well as that of Ladies, the gremio is part of a remote link to a formerly aristocratic past and not a particular form of religious expression fundamental for their lives. In other words, the fiesta is not, either in the religious or in the ludic, an important aspect of their lives. This is perfectly clear in other gremios when they point out that some ladies feel embarrassed when carrying the banners during the processions and, have eliminated from their activities the realization of conjuntas.

This particular situation contrasts with the importance given last century and still today to the fiesta of the Santo Cristo de las Ampollas by gremios such as the one of the Stall Holders of the new town market, of Bakers and of Carpenters for which gremios used to be and still are a means of social prestige, solidarity and group, occupational and local identity.

Also it was an important space of symbolic competence. This effect was felt by all social sectors since in the fiestas were represented the most important social and occupational groups of the city. However, every day this

social function is lost since, especially in such a growing city as Mérida, new forms of entertainment are appearing on the side and alternative means of social prestige which include new forms for consuming the phenomenon Catholic religion.

As has already been pointed out, solidarity and occupational identity were also present in the fiestas of the Cathedral. The participants of the gremios of different trades, such as Tailors, did not always have possibilities of grouping. The fiesta created the conditions, at least once a year, to establish or reinforce social links and occupational identity as a consequence of the fiesta and the organization into gremios. Besides their religious function of worshiping the Christ, gremios worked as an instrument for communicating and propagating the specific problems of the trades. This situation has changed radically due to the creation of trade unions and the even more difficult situation of them within the local labor panorama. As pointed out several times by some members of the Gremio of Ropemakers, there was not any disposition from their trade union to maintain the links with the fiesta as was done years ago. Due to the disappearance of the industry of ropemaking, which used to be controlled by the State, in the present-day gremio of Ropemakers only ex-ropemakers participate who anchor their links in their "glorious" labor past.

The patronal fiesta of Mérida, lacking an aspect properly profane<sup>13</sup> since there are no fiesteros, keeps a sort of balance shown in the life of the gremios. This life is characterized by the participant contrasts in the gremios of the fiesta. Thus, for example on the day corresponding to the Stall Holders in the new town market the number of associates and different delegations participating in the procession of entrada of the gremio is a lot higher (ca. 300 persons in 1992) than the number of participants in the Gremio of Tradesmen and Hacendados (only 4 persons).

Another important element to consider is the creation of new gremios. This leads us to believe that in certain social sectors the fiesta still represents an adequate mechanism for canalizing this religious devotion to a particular patron saint which is also an important part of their personalities and their occupational identity.

There are other elements which produce types of identity wider than those already mentioned. In particular, it is important to point out the inclusion of mariachís as a way to show their links to the national environment since the mariachi has become, even at an international level, a

---

<sup>13</sup> It is important to mention here, that the sacred and profane components of the patronal fiesta are no longer present in fiestas as in the Cathedral. They let off fireworks, they organize conjuntas, but theoretically neither of these aspects are considered profane as they are related to the gremios. The profane aspect has also been absent from the fiesta of Sisal for many years.

cultural element of national identity. The mariachí music is used for the serenades to the images.

Thus, in general, the fiesta of the Cathedral shows a sort of stagnation with a tendency towards the decrease (perhaps not disappearance) of the participation of the gremios or in the gremios.

The annual and/or circumstantial variations show that the patronal fiesta within the context of the city, the change of the role of the center of town within the residential distribution of Mérida and the rapid processes of socio-cultural transformation offering more and more varied forms of enjoyment for the realization of the homo ludens, make patronal fiestas a space every time less adequate for religious expression, enjoyment and even the investment and economic exploitation of the fiesta. As a gremiero told me: "why don't you go to see the fiestas of the villages. Those are done the way they should be, here we do not follow the tradition".

Hunucma. The social structures of the communities studies is also reflected in the fiestas of Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal.

The fiesta must start four Sundays before ash Wednesday, lasting about 22 days.<sup>14</sup> The program of

---

<sup>14</sup> The case of Hunucma and Tetiz presents an interesting case as an ambiguity exists regarding the definition of fiesta.

On one hand it is applied to all the fiesta, which is to say to the 22 days, in the case of Hunucma, and to the 18

activities, which is prepared jointly with the Church, includes the following: entrada (12 im), rosary (6 pm), mass for the dead of the gremio and mass of salida (11 am the following day).

When two or more gremios share the entrada there is a variation of the times of these days.

1. Gremio of Bronze Workers and Hunters
2. Gremio of Renovation of the Holy Spirit
3. Gremio of Hunters
4. Gremio of Seed Planters
5. Union and Work Gremio
6. Small Bronze Workers Gremio
7. Gremio of Female Vegetable Sellers
8. Gremio of Children
9. Gremio of Fishermen
10. Faith, Hope and Charity Gremio
11. Union and Strength Gremio
12. Gremio of Parcel Owners

---

days in the case of Tetiz which is the time elapsing between the entrada en salida of the gremios to and from the church. On the other hand the term is used to refer to the simultaneity of two sacred and profane events that take place during the last week of the fiesta. Two nonexclusive motives could explain this situation, the first would relate to the expansion of the duration of the fiesta (other fiestas only last a week). The second would be concerned with the corridas or bullfights, considered to be determinants in giving the name of fiesta to the joining of sacred and profane activities which take place each year in relation to a patron saint, as happens in the east of the State (Quintal 1992).

13. Gremio of Peasants
14. Gremio of Young Ladies
15. Gremio of Coal Workers
16. Gremio of Musicians
17. Gremio of Suppliers
18. Gremio of Artisans
19. Gremio of Shoemakers
20. Gremio of Farm Workers
21. Gremio of Bus Drivers
22. Gremio of Ladies
23. Gremio Ramillete
24. Gremio of Small Tradesmen

Gremios marked 6, 7 and 8 enter the church the same day as do gremios marked 21 and 22 and 23 and 24.

The prolongation of the fiesta, from one to three weeks, through the inclusion of new gremios reveals that the occupational configuration of the population is well distributed in the three occupational sectors.

It can also be noted that several gremios of the same occupation may be organized which points out that the family and neighborhood bonds are important for the participation of the population in certain gremios.

On the other hand, the great number of gremios, even greater than the ones in Mérida, participating in the fiesta reveals the importance of the role of the fiesta in the social life of the community. In Hunucma the fiesta is still

a central event for the religious and social life of the community.

Tetiz. The fiesta lasts from July 31 to August 16. The participating gremios are:

1. Faith, Hope and charity Gremio. Daría Borges
2. Gremio of Farmers. María Isabel Chan
3. Hope Gremio
4. Peace and Harmony Gremio. Senobia Canche
5. Gremio of Hunters. Alejandro Dzuc Tuz
6. Gremio of Peasants. Anastacia Puc
6. Gremio of Justo Uc
7. Gremio of Male and Female Peasants. Rosalía Borges
8. Gremio of Ladies and Young Ladies. Basilio Chan
9. Gremio of Peasants. Avelino Canche
10. Gremio of Aida Sosa.
11. Gremio of Young Gentlemen and Ladies. Nasaria Canul.

In the case of Tetiz it is important to note that the number of gremios is not enough to cover all the days of the fiesta. Therefore the days in which gremios do not enter, the nocheros are in charge of paying for the rosaries for them not to be interrupted. The nocheros are people who have made this promise to the Virgin that carry out all through their lives. It is even inherited by the family of the person who made the promise after they are dead.

Another important element of contrast noticeable in the fiesta of Tetiz is that many gremios are named after their



presidents, despite having their own names: even within the church they are referred to with the name of the person, that explains the names in the list of gremios.

In terms of the participation, and the importance of, the fiesta in the context of the community, the differences between the fiestas of the Cathedral and of Hunucma and Tetiz are overwhelming. In other words, the fiesta is still a space for a particular religious expression where enjoyment and economics exploitation also coincide.

It is also convenient to mention again an element which greatly contributes to the fiesta maintaining its privileged rank within the community: the position of the image in the northwestern part of Yucatán as a sanctuary which binds people well beyond the borders of the parish.

Sisal. The gremios participating in the fiesta of Sisal are the following:

1. Holy Hour Gremio
2. Legion of Mary Gremio
3. Gremio of Children "Un bello amanecer"
4. Gremio of Tradesmen
5. Gremio of Maiden Ladies
6. Gremio of Ladies
7. Gremio of Fishermen

Sisal presents a situation similar to the one of Mérida, but it is believed that there are other reasons which prevent it from having the same importance as the

fiestas of Hunucma and Tetiz. The low participation of the inhabitants of Sisal is due, among other reasons, to: 1. the recent conflicts between the priest and the gremios, 2. the interfering of the fishermen of Hunucma in the main economic activity of the community, 3. the competition between the Church and the gremios for the economic exploitation of the fiesta, and 4. the low interest of the tradesmen in the community for spending their money on non-profitable activities which does not imply a loss of their religiosity.

Thus, the fiestas of Sisal only attracts crowds of people during the last day of the fiesta when the procession of the image of the Señor de Sisal takes place on the sea, but it is this same day when the competition for economic resources between the church and the gremios can be seen most clearly.

As in Mérida, in Sisal the absence of the profane aspect of the fiesta can also be noted although this absence has been interrupted three times. After nearly nine years absence, 1993 marked the return of the profane aspect.

#### Remate, Vaquería, Dance and Bullfights

To begin with, the profane aspect of the fiesta is in the hands of the Town Council which is in charge of the remate of the fiesta. Remate is the concession given, on payment for the corresponding rights, to an individual or group, for exploiting the fiesta commercially by several means, such as the organization of popular dances, the

rights for selling beer, the organization of the bullfights, etc.

For the remate of the fiesta the Town Council usually organizes a meeting attended by all those interested in order to know the amount of money the municipio is requesting. Generally the one offering the most obtains the concession although in many cases there are arrangements "under the table" to favor a friend or relative. The complaints of those who were not favored with the remate, are often newspaper headlines.

The amount of money required by the Town Council for the remate of the fiesta varies every year. Just to give an idea of the amount of money paid by a fiestero, in 1993 the remate of the fiesta was N\$ 25,000.00 (nearly US\$ 7,561.78). Besides, the fiestero had to "donate" N\$ 10,000.00 (nearly US\$ 3,184.71) to the church of Tetiz, pay a certain amount to the palqueros<sup>15</sup> and pay for the receptions in the round-pilgrimages of the image.<sup>16</sup>

This financial prospect made the fiestero refuse to organize the fiesta. Another remate took place and this time

---

<sup>15</sup> Palqueros, the name given to the people who construct the bullring or tablado where the bullfights take place. The name palquero derives from the Spanish palco or stand with seats.

<sup>16</sup> The remate of the fiesta of Hunucma includes in a equal form the rights of organizing the carnival dances which take place the week after the end of the festival.

the price was substantially reduced to N\$ 18,000.00 (nearly US\$ 5,732.48), but still it was necessary that several people grouped together in order to pay all the amounts required by the Town Council.

On some occasions there is no remate and the Town Council stays in charge of its organization. However, this is not frequent since, it seems, it is more effective economically speaking, to leave it in the hands of other parties.

Recently and following patterns similar to those of other parts of Yucatán, a fair has been included in the fiesta. The aim is to take advantage of the large number of visiting devotees. Traders and local factories seize the opportunity to display and commercialize their products. Thus, in the fiesta of Hunucma an exposition and shoe market has been organized and local producers set up stands in which they show and sell their products.

The profane aspect of the fiesta takes place during the last week. It starts with a traditional dance called vaquería characterized by the dance of the jarana. This dancing is attended both by people from the community and by delegations of dancers from other parts of the State, usually from municipalities close to the community in which the vaquería takes place.

It is also important to point out here an important characteristic of the fiesta directly related to its sacred

aspect. Both in Hunucma and Tetiz the image of the Virgen de la Asunción (Virgin of the Assumption) is dressed up with dresses similar to the ones the vaqueros are wearing, that is, at that moment, the Virgin is a vaquera. This is an important connection between the profane and sacred spaces of the fiesta where the limits of both are lost, the sacred image participating in the profane, ludic aspects of the fiesta.

Popular dances are also organized by the fiesteros. Like the vaquerías they also take place in the corridors of the Town Hall, but they do not involve the organized presence of groups of dancers from other regions.

Another important element within the profane aspect of the fiesta is the bullfight. For their realization it is necessary to make arrangements between the fiesteros and the palqueros. The latter are the people in charge of the construction of the bullring or tablado where the bullfights will take place. The task of each palquero is the construction of a part of the bullring using wooden sticks and palm leaves or zinc sheets. The expenses for acquiring these materials are covered by the palqueros, although on some occasions they are sponsored by the fiesteros.

The palqueros are the ones who will be favored with money from the sale of tickets for the bullfight. The joint work of all palqueros makes possible the construction of the bullring.

The palqueros trade is not a job that anyone can do. Every year the same people and the same number of them are in charge of the construction of the bullrings and in the event of death or illness any of their children or close relatives will substitute for them.

There is no known case of a palquero who has refused participating in the construction of the tablado of his own accord.

On the other hand, on some occasions there have been some conflicts between palqueros and fiesteros especially because of the introduction of portable bullrings, financed by beer companies, which go from fiesta to fiesta. The use of these bullrings eliminates the work of the palqueros during the fiesta. There are no palqueros in all the communities studied. They do not exist in Mérida or in Sisal. Their absence in these fiestas is mainly due to the virtual absence of the profane aspect of the fiesta in these locations.<sup>17</sup>

The fiesteros do not get direct economic benefits from the organization of the bullfight, but through the selling of beer during the time of the fiesta, especially at the bullfights. The number of bullfights performed during the fiesta varies. Usually they take place in the last week of

---

<sup>17</sup> In the case of Sisal, the fiesta of 1993 included the presence of a bullfight, but the tablado used was a portable one, not the traditional one for whose construction palqueros are needed.

the fiesta, as happens in Hunucma and Tetiz. In both communities the joint presence of the profane and sacred aspects make the fiesta.

Thus, the fiesteros are the ones in charge of the economic exploitation of the fiesta and, why not?, of the image itself. This situation is so clear that the absence of the Virgin of Tetiz (due to post-election political conflicts) in the fiesta of Hunucma in 1991 and 1992 caused the bankruptcy of the fiesteros in the first year and in the second, the suppression of the profane aspect of the fiesta. The Town Council even had to pay back the money received for the remate of the fiesta. In some cases, the economic benefits obtained by the fiesteros come not from the organization of the fiesta alone. In the specific case of Hunucma, for example, with the remate the fiesteros also acquire the rights for exploiting commercially the carnival which takes place the week following the end of the fiesta. As is done during the fiesta, during the carnival they obtain money through the organization of dances, the charges of the so-called "right of ground" for fairground attractions and the stands set up on the occasion of the commercial and handcrafts fair.

#### The Circulation of the Images and Other Celebrations

A relevant fact deserving separate treatment is the circulation of the images through the chapels and churches both inside and outside the parish of Hunucma.

As has already been said, Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal belong to the same parish. Inside the parish and in relation to some neighboring communities, what could be called the circulation of the images is frequent or, to put it colloquially, the images of this region are good "strollers", this is the way in which the people from the parish used to refer those images that visit different places during the year.

There are two kinds of visits which may be called ordinary and extraordinary. The former are all those visits made by the images according to any festive cycle during the year. The latter are the ones made once in a while in response to particular circumstances.

Inside the parish, the ordinary visits made annually by the Virgin of Tetiz are of special importance. These are the visits to the following places: Hunucma, in January and February for the most important fiesta of the region; Sisal, for the Holy Week, either in March or April; Kinchil, in June; and Celestun in July (see figure 2).<sup>18</sup>

In the case of the Señor de Sisal, whose image is kept in the church of Saint Francis of Asis of Hunucma all year, the image visits the port of Sisal during the whole of

---

<sup>18</sup> It is necessary to mention that the visits of the image to other places does not necessarily mean that they will be the patron saints of the communities visited; in fact, in the cases of Kinchil and Celestun for example, the Virgin of Tetiz only accompanies the images of the two communities in their fiesta.



August for the celebration of the fiesta in his honor. Another place where the image is taken every year is Hacienda Chac.

Within the same parish, a third image is taken to other places outside its chapel: the Virgin of the Assumption of San Antonio Chel visits the port of Sisal and other small communities every October.

The circulation of the images can be seen as a symbolic circulation which shows the parish communion and allows a constant flow of people between neighboring communities. The presence of certain images reinforces the feelings of belonging and location of the social actors who participate actively in the carrying of the images.

In the particular case of the Virgin of Tetiz, its presence on the places mentioned is considered as an extension of the sanctuary, an extension of the place considered sacred by the faithful of a community (Diez 1989). The sanctuary expands itself through the presence of the element which imparts a religious dynamic to the population, of the elements which sanctifies the places visited with a prestige present in the minds of each participant.

However, the presence of the Virgin of Tetiz, as well as the other images, also implies a sort of symbolic (Bourdieu 1981) and real control of the most important religious manifestations of the communities visited. In some

cases, as in Hunucma, it also means the complete subordination of the fiesta to a control completely out of the hands of the population.

The control over certain images has produced, in fact, situations of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1981) such as the ones which took place in Tetiz and Hunucma in 1991 and 1992 when the former rejected the participation of the image in the fiesta of the latter (see Appendix).

In this control it can be seen that the economic and political domination of the region centered in Hunucma as a "bigger community" vanishes when confronted with its dependence on a specific symbolic good when compared to the rank of the sanctuary of Tetiz in the religious field.

The special relationship between the presence of certain images and some of the economic benefits produced by the visits cannot be ignored. Thus, the presence or absence of certain images may produce enough income to the receiving communities to accomplish various works within them.

The case of the image of the Cristo de las Ampollas reveals less of the symbolic control or of the conflicts that may arise around it due, mainly, to the fact that no other fiesta apart from the Cathedral celebrates its fiesta with this image. Different from the images mentioned above, this fiesta does not have an annual calendar of activities and all possible visits are arranged exclusively through the Church, without the intervention of local groups in deciding

whether the image will or not be present in certain religious activities.

It is also necessary to mention that in the cases of Hunucma, Tetiz and Sisal, the patronal fiesta is still the most important religious event independent of the real control that both the Church or the community may have over it.

Nevertheless, besides the annual celebration of the fiesta, there are other events which are also celebrated jointly by the Church and the parishioners.

Almost as important as the patronal fiesta, the population of Hunucma also celebrates the fiesta of Corpus Christi every June. Despite being framed within the liturgic calendar of the Catholic Church, this fiesta shows such interesting modalities that it could be considered, like the patronal fiesta, as another expression of popular religion.

In the past, the participation of the population in the activities of Corpus Christi was through the families in charge of the celebration.

Among the most relevant characteristics of the fiesta are the construction of an enramada (a construction made of palm leaves) in the grounds of the church. Several groups of men are in charge of the construction of the enramada, each group being responsible for the construction of one part. The formation of these groups does not correspond to the organization by sectors of Hunucma but rather to groups

previously established and based on friendship and bonds of religious commitment.

The fiesta begins on a Thursday and ends on a Saturday, ten days later. The inhabitants of Hunucma say that it lasts fifteen days although they are conscious of the true duration. It is important to note that the tasks related to the fiesta have to start well in advance. In fact, the construction of the enramada has to be completed at least the day before the beginning of the fiesta so that each of the thirteen sectors in which the church has divided Hunucma has enough time to ornament their corresponding part of the enramada with offerings.

The enramada also involves the construction of four altars, one on each corner of the corridor (and therefore on each cardinal point). The construction and ornamentation of these altars are in the care of the families who own the images for whom they were constructed.

The images participating in the fiesta of Corpus Christi in Hunucma are: Santiago (or Santiaguito, as it is called in Hunucma), the Cristo de las Ampollas, the Santo Niño de Atocha and the Niño Dios. The presence of these images in the fiesta seems to be quite old and the obligations for participating have been inherited by several generations.

The participating images are family images which, besides taking part in this celebration, are the object of a

novenario performed to worship them according to the liturgic calendar.

They are also attributed with the performance of miracles, particularly the cure of the sick and they are also considered to have the ability to penalize those who perform bad deeds.<sup>19</sup>

In the afternoons of the days prior to the processions of Corpus Christi people from the different sectors of Hunucma go to the church in order to participate in the ornamentation of their corresponding part of the enramada. The offerings presented show a very interesting multiple function. They are at the same time: a) religious offerings; b) a reflection of the occupational configuration of the population; c) artistic expressions of the community; and d) means for expressing some of the events with relevant impact in the social life of the community.

The fiesta of the Corpus Christi is not only limited to the religious expressions present in the grounds of the church. Not only does it involve the organization of charity fairs on the days prior to the processions in order to raise funds for the church through voluntary work, but it also involves other spaces, activities and personages. As with

---

<sup>19</sup> Saints like Santiaguito are said to be punishers as well producers of miracles since on one occasion a woman tricked some people who were participating in the novenario (novena) devoted to him. When she arrived home after deceiving the novenario she found some part of her house on fire, so she proceeded to buy some candles and afterwards joined the novenario.

other festival days in Yucatán, the presence of the fair (with mechanical rides) in the main square of the community is indispensable. Also, every evening during the fiesta a torito de fuego (a kind of firework) is burnt and on some mornings the same is done with cipreces. In the evenings, bachatas (dances without live music) take place in different houses, usually lasting the whole evening, during which several kinds of drinks and food are served.

In Tetiz the second most important religious celebration is the one of the Virgen de la Asunción. It takes place every May and lasts the 31 days of the month.

May is considered the month of Mary and for this reason it is a custom of Yucatecans, both in the villages and the cities, that children are sent to the church to offer flowers known as "flowers of May" as an offering to the Virgin Mary or, as it is said in the region, to "present flowers".

Given the importance of the Virgin Mary in Yucatecan Catholicism and that it is an advocacy of the Virgin of Tetiz, a celebration has been instituted in order to establish an order in the encounters of the Virgin with them within the month annually dedicated to her.

The way the inhabitants of Tetiz have organized themselves for this celebration follows very much the pattern of a patronal fiesta. Each day of the month has been assigned to a person and their family. The activities the

families have to carry out are: 1. ornament the altar with figures made with "flowers of May", 2. offer a meal to the participants of the fiesta, and 3. pay for the fireworks that will be let off on the occasion.

The expenses for participating in the celebration are the responsibility of the families and there are no mechanisms for raising funds like the ones of the gremios. However, despite being a heavy expense, nobody wants to stop participating and there are many people who would be willing to adopt a day of the celebration.

Participation is so important that not even the death of the person responsible for a "day of the Virgin" has made their families stop participating and another member of the same will hold the direct responsibility.

Despite being outside of the organization of the celebration, May is a suitable month to initiate children in the Catholic religion so that it also becomes the month of Holy Communion celebrations.

Thus, the ornaments with "flowers of May" and the month of the Virgin are the most adequate frame for introducing the children into Catholicism.

In Sisal there are no alternative religious celebrations grouping, even only during the final procession of the patronal fiesta, important numbers of people of the community. Nevertheless, the population also worships, as stated in the previous paragraph, two images which,

similarly to the Señor de Sisal, are brought to the port in pilgrimages: the Virgen de la Asunción of Tetiz and the Virgen de la Asuncion of San Antonio Chel.

The presence of either image has not generated proper organizational forms, they only reproduce some of the characteristics of the patronal fiesta such as the processions with the image within the community and the celebration of rosaries in the sectors comprising the communities.

Faced with this panorama it is necessary to reiterate the importance that the patronal fiesta still has as a public form of expressing popular Catholicism.



## CHAPTER 6

### CLOSING: FINAL ANALYTICAL COMMENTS

This last chapter is an attempt to review the main ideas explained in the previous chapters in order to recover analytically the historiographic and ethnographic descriptions present in those chapters.

#### Official Religion-Popular Religion

As it has been stated a fiesta articulates several conceptions about the effective way in which the relationship between patrons and images should be carried out.

Conceived as miraculous and punishing, the fundamental relationship bears the notion of contact: fulfilled petitions, fulfilled promises. The origin of many present-day gremios stems from the formalization of such a relationship between image and people.

On the other hand, this relationship led to certain practices about which, as stated by Farriss (1984) priests complained as they have little to do with orthodox Catholicism. A similar situation can be observed nowadays. Yet, it is necessary to detail some problems regarding the effective control given in the fiesta to determine the "transactions" operating in a patronal fiesta.

The participation in the sacred space of three instances of patronal fiestas in the west of Yucatán show different levels of transaction between the Church and secular groups. To begin with, the total control over an organization The Legion of Mary, which, emanated from its own structure, obeys the norms established by the priest following more strictly the Catholic orthodoxy regarding the relationship between image and the laity.

Its recent creation in the region (no more than 13 years ago) has to do with the control that the Church has increasingly been trying to exert on the sacred space of patronal fiestas. The introduction of this organization modifies the activities of the fiesta since it introduced more spaces where the Virgin and the parish are under the official cover of the Church. The processions with the image and rosaries said in the church reveal the increasing control of the church over this aspect of the fiesta (also, the music for the processions is produced by the church chorus).

With the second organization, the cargadores, the operating control over the group is different. This depends on friendship bonds and the ecclesiastic work undertaken by the priest in the communities. In this sense, the cargadores become such through the priest's explicit recognition inside the sphere of the sacred. This does not prevent making decisions which, in many cases, lead to practices not

positively sanctioned by the Church such as, perhaps, the excessive consumption of alcohol during their participation in the fiesta.

Definitely, the organization which best shows independent control over and important part of the sacred is the gremio. Here the priest's input is nearly nonexistent. In fact, in some cases there are conflicts between some gremios and priests, although this is not frequent.

Despite been anchored to a past of relative Church dominance, gremios nowadays show cultural practices which demonstrate the clear domain of this organization. Gremios do not ask or consult the Church in any sense nor for any activities; they define the program activities and the inclusion and exclusion of persons and tasks.

Despite the fact that during the recent conflicts in Hunucma and Tetiz (see Appendix) the priest confronted several sectors of the population, he could not deny anybody's participation in the fiesta. The structure of the fiesta and the gremios within it are beyond the reach of the church as far as the determination of an "official" orthodoxy is concerned.

Regarding the profane aspect, in the parish of Hunucma the commercial exploitation of the fiesta can also be noted, which apparently contradicts certain norms of the Church since through charity fairs it receives economical benefits from something which should be negatively sanctioned:

drunkenness. However, here the end justifies the means and every participant of the charity fair is thus helping the church.

Thus, a process of hegemonization of the fiesta by the Church can be seen. First with the introduction of certain activities inside the space of the sacred whose control states totally in the hands of this institution and with its participation in the commercial exploitation of the fiesta as a direct competitor of the fiesteros.

In Mérida the situation is completely different. There is no process of hegemonization insofar as, on one hand, gremios accept the disposition of the Church as an institution as long as the church respects the internal forms of the gremios.

On the other hand, the Church does not pretend to control the internal organization of the gremios nor alter the activities of the fiesta. In this sense, for example, the Church concentrates only on the benefits obtained by the payments for celebrating masses, rosaries and other services generally offer throughout the year.

Neither does the nonexistence of a proper profane aspect within the activities carried out during the fiesta generate a competition between alternative forms of conceptualizing the image. Thus, it can be said that there is a sort of adaptation or "transaction" between gremios and the Church where different forms of relationship with the

goods co-exist in different ways but without apparent conflict.

### Gremios and Cargadores

It is also useful to work towards a characterization of these associations. Regarding the gremios, it can be said in general that, following Moreno's classification (1985), these associations both in the past and nowadays tend to a vertical integration, that is to an integration including people of different social classes.

However, considering the belonging criteria, certain important variations can be found during their history, although that tendency can not be generalized. At the beginning there were some restrictions related to occupation. Thus, all those people who did not perform the same occupation were excluded from participating. Nevertheless, as years passed by, the gremios were opened and began accepting the relatives of the gremieros and later even included people who were not related with the gremieros either through the occupation or through kinship ties.

The appearance of gremios grouping people around certain characteristics that Catholicism advocates for its congregation showed the tendency to open the fiesta to people who were outside.

Another important variation has to do with the pressure exerted, in many cases, on the laborers in order to contribute economically to the celebrations of the gremios.

Cases such as the Gremio of Bakers of the Cathedral, where a certain amount of money for the fiesta was deducted from their salaries during the year, participation was not only automatic but also compulsory for certain laborers.

This situation has changed completely. Nowadays there are no pressure mechanisms which can be exerted on laborers, therefore all the gremios depend on voluntary participation to carry out their obligations to the image.

For their part, cargadores are considered, in the same classification of Moreno (1985) as a vertical and voluntary association. Here, less than in the gremios, mechanisms of social obligation exist or have existed. Belonging to a group depends on individual commitments. These are generally marked by certain kinds of events which will produce a specific type of relationship to the image.

#### Occupational Structure and Consumption of the Fiesta

Regarding its relationship to society it has been observed that a Yucatecan patronal fiesta reflects to a greater or lesser degree, the occupational structure of the society.

In this sense, it can be said that the fiesta constitutes a key to understanding the society in which the fiesta takes place.

As a reflection of the occupational structure it is important to consider that through the fiesta the different social classes express themselves. With this, an important

question related to cultural consumption can also be noted. A fiesta is consumed by different social classes. Its popular character is based on the control of the process of decision and on its contradiction to the official conceptions of the Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, according to this perspective, the ways of consuming the cultural product "fiesta" varies. The role of the fiesta played within the religious panorama of gremios of hegemonic classes in the society of Mérida was completely different to the role it plays today. Buying special clothing to attend the celebration and the important economic investment in the fiesta organized by the gremio of hacendados and tradesmen and of ladies belonging to these classes exemplified a particular way of consumption which no longer exists. Nowadays this consumption has become a kind of inherited "burden" rather than an important social and religious behavior.

In the communities of the parish of Hunucma the situation is radically different. Following Ossowski (1974), here it can be said that, despite the social differences, the social context in which a fiesta develops has not indicated that economic differences generate significant changes in the consumption of the fiesta. Once more, a change in simple gradation has not corresponded to a change in the synthetic gradation. In Mérida and in the port of Sisal the economical and social dynamics that these

communities have adopted do not generate the necessity to participate in the fiestas. In the first case, this is mainly due to the fact that the role of the fiestas as the expression of a particular religiosity is not adopted by large parts of the population of the city. In Sisal, apart from the poor economic situation that does not permit investing, the fiesta is new and it has not been considered as a proper way for expressing religiosity. Therefore, the scarce resources that could be invested are routed elsewhere.

On the other hand, both in Hunucma and Tetiz the fiesta is anchored to a pattern of religious behavior which sees the fiesta as a good way to express religiosity. To this two different socioeconomic situations are added. The vision of Hunucma as socioeconomic capital of the district indicates a moment of growth reflected by the nearly nonexistent difference between the three occupational sectors. Tetiz lives in relative affluence due to the recent incorporation of craft workshops and the presence of poultry farms which have contributed greatly in setting the economic situation of a population devastated by the almost total destruction of the most important source of employment: henequen plantations.

Both situations make it possible for them to participate in a fiesta without equal in the region. To the economic possibilities is added the fact that the worshiped



image has an importance that goes beyond the local, becoming in the region, the image of the sanctuary.

### Fiestas and Identity

Finally some reflections about the manifestation of certain types of social identity will be presented.

As noted by Crandon-Malamud (1993) a fiesta is one of the common places for reflection, one of the better ways for expressing social identities, particularly ethnic identity. However, this is no reason to lay aside the analysis of patronal fiestas since the ways through which they express themselves are varied and emphasize and differentiate several aspects of the social reality in which the individuals are involved.

In a fiesta it is possible to distinguish several types of identity produced not by mutation but rather by a process of adaptation to the sociocultural conditions in which this phenomenon is inscribed. Thus, to begin with, four different types of identity, mutually exclusive and expressed in different ways, can be considered.

These identities are expressed indistinctly both in the sacred and the profane aspects of the fiesta, but all of them are expressed at same time during the fiesta.

The first type is what here has been called local identity. This refers basically to the territory, to the physical space in which social actors perform. It is shown in several ways such as the name of the place on the

banners, the advertisements of the fiesta stuck in a number of places in neighboring communities, the delegations sent by the gremios to other fiesta, the delegations of dancers for the vaquerías, etc.

The local identity uses a number of mechanisms to manifest itself. In each of them the necessary reference is the name of the community. Thus, it is not the Gremio of Musicians in abstract, but the Gremio of Musicians of Hunucma. Its configuration, as with any other gremio, is the community, itself condensed in this kind of association.

Thus, the local identity is an identity operating through contrast with other communities. It is an identity tied to the intersocietal contrast; it attempts to distinguish itself from the other communities.

The second level of identity is the one related to occupation. The occupational identity is expressed as noted before, through pabellones, banners, children's fancy dresses for the Cathedral, the presence during the processions of objects related to the occupation such as maize plants, vegetables, etc.

This type of identity is founded on the basis of intersocietal contact, on the existing contrast inside the community. Therefore, what attempted is to emphasize the peculiarity of each group.

The third type of identity is what might be called national identity. This emphasizes the presence of a few

elements taken from symbolic contexts outside the community and even the region, which are based on patriotic feeling. The presence of at least two elements point in that direction. One of them is the mariachi, considered internationally as the most representative music of México. The second has to do with the colors of the pabellones which reproduce the colors of their disposition on the national flag. In this way the fiesta relates to a territory that goes well beyond the local.

The last type of identity of interest to point out and one which is strongly involved in the whole fiesta, is the constitution and continuation of an ethnic Maya-mestiza identity. This is expressed by certain diacritic features such as the dresses, dances, language, food, etc.

It is an identity which, although not in all cases is built up out of everyday life<sup>1</sup> and in the explicit recognition of the place of the fiesta within the panorama of community life and its participation in it as a public event.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Here, the ethnic identity is sustained by the general and accepted set of cultural practices of community and not by the introduction of new cultural models that could offer the possibilities of maintaining and expressing it that way.

<sup>2</sup> This idea of ethnic identity formulated following Barabas and Bartolomé (1986), attempts to distinguish itself from the so-called "regional identity" which would be no more than the appropriation and transfer of certain diacritic features to wider spaces of consumption from which they are not original. For example, the so-called "Regional Night" of the carnival of Mérida and the participation of women in the national beauty contests wearing the terno as

As a rite, the fiesta acts as way to keep the myth alive contributing to maintain the ethnic identity of the community and also of the region as it integrates a number of persons from other places who share similar cultural practices.

Thinking of Yucatecan patronal fiestas means thinking of the integration, not always harmonic, of several sociocultural practices that in many cases, give sense to the lives of Yucatecan people. It also means constructing and event anchored in the past and present of the Yucatecans. However, the task has just begun.

## APPENDIX

The political conflict noted in the religious sphere is strongly related to the current political tendencies present in the State of Yucatán. These tendencies point out the extreme polarization existing between the two most important political parties of México: the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) and the PAN (National Action Party). The polarization of the political behavior of the Yucatecans is not new. However, it is just recently that it has been expressed more openly. An example of this is the fact that during the elections for the president of México, nearly 98% of the population voted in favor of one of the already mentioned parties. In the same federal elections the behavior of voters in the 4th district, to which Tetiz and Hunucma belong, was similar to the rest of the state: 98% of voters opted for one of the PRI-PAN options (Electoral Acts Results, provided by Uuc Kib Espadas).

Despite this situation, it is important to note that both the 4th district and Yucatán as a whole PRI outnumbered by more than twice, the votes obtained by the PAN in the federal election of 1988.

On November 25, 1990 municipal and federal elections took place in Yucatán. As usually happens in the Mexican

electoral process, those elections were not exempt from claims and accusations from the opposition parties and candidates. Hunucma and Tetiz were two of the populations where the strongest parties claimed triumph. In Hunucma, not without protest from the PAN, victory went to the PRI candidate who thus became the municipal president (mayor). According to the local press, the PRI candidate only obtained 66 more votes than the PAN candidate (BCRM, Diario de Yucatán, November 26, 1990).

The National Action Party decided to protest the controversial success of the ruling party with a program of civil resistance which, in many cases, exceeded its intentions.

On the 27th of the same month there was a first "occupation" of the Municipal Palace (City Hall) of Hunucma. According to the local press, 2,000 people participated in this event. There was not only a protest about the supposed irregularities in Polling station No. 5 located in the port of Sisal, but also a demand for a clarification of the facts relating to the aggression suffered by Timoteo Canché Tinal, National Action candidate for federal deputy for the 4th District. The same month several small demonstrations of protest took place in the main square of Hunucma.

Similarly, December 1990 was a tense month in the cabecera municipal. For the first time according to the local press the Church was one of the political actors of

the conflict. It was even necessary to mount a guard in the temple of Hunucma to protect the priest who had identified himself as a PAN supporter. (BCRM, Diario de Yucatán December 20, 1990).<sup>1</sup> In Tetiz, it was resolved to form a council and to hold or call for elections at a later date.

This was followed by take-overs and small demonstrations until the most regrettable event took place: the profanation of the church of San Francis of Asis in Hunucma by the state police. This took place supposedly because of a plea made by the Municipal mayor who considered the protest organized by "Panistas" in the main square a menace. The policemen broke into the church, destroying doors and other objects. In addition they made several unjustified arrests and violated human rights.

The results of this raid, organized by the Secretaría de Protección y Vialidad (Police), provoked the resignation of its head and the direct involvement of the governor of the state.

The result of this was the formation of a plural council in which the mayors from the PRI and the PAN were involved.

---

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the priest of Hunucma has participated actively in some conflicts in his parish outside the religious sphere. During the first months of 1990 a labor-political conflict took place in Tetiz and Hunucma involving several private farms located in both municipios. The priest's intervention as mediator between authorities, workers and owners was important at several stages and it seems, placed him on the side of the gremial organization (labor) which took part in the events.

Towards the end of January 1991, the worst moments of the contentiou had passed and several Masses of amendment had been given. Then rumors began as to the possible cancellation of the visit of the Virgin of Tetiz to Hunucma. These were confirmed at the beginning of February. Uncertainty was general among cargadores, gremieros and the public; and contradictory opinions were issued regarding the visit. The inhabitants of Tetiz stated at the time that because of the affront suffered by the church the Virgin would not visit Hunucma for the following three years. Although it was not officially stated at the time, responsibility for the events fell on the mayor of the municipio. The Virgin did not visit Hunucma but the activities of the gremios took place. The general agreement was that the fiesta did not have the adequate brilliance due to the absence of the Virgin.<sup>2</sup> In 1992 things seemed to have changed after a year of tranquility. On Sunday, January 19 the fiesteros, cargadores and a large number of inhabitants of Hunucma applied formally for the presence of the Virgin during the fiesta of Hunucma. On the church porch a meeting took place, attended by the mayor and the fiesteros of Hunucma and the Church of Tetiz Vigilance Committee. The meeting concluded with a decision not to

---

<sup>2</sup> Several gremios organized visits to Tetiz during their corresponding days of fiesta, among them the Gremio of Female Vegetable Sellers and the Gremio of Ladies. Also the cargadores of Tetiz organized a procession with a portrait of the Virgin thus simulating the end of the fiesta.



authorize the visit of the Virgin to Hunucma. The inhabitants of Tetiz were already angry because, a few days earlier, Carrillo Lugo (priest parish of Hunucma) had been insulted in the local press and in graffiti on walls in the community. In short, the inhabitants of Tetiz did not allow the departure of the Virgin. They had previously done so at the request of the cargadores of Sisal when they applied for the presence of the Virgin in that port during the Holy Week of 1991.

A second visit of petition took place on Sunday, January 26, proceeded by a "via crucis" of reconciliation and repentance, but not even this had no effect on the inhabitants of Tetiz who, once more, refused the participation of the Virgin in the fiestas. It is important to note that this second meeting was also attended by a representative of the Archbishop of Yucatán. He after realized that there was no possibility of agreement between the factions and decided to end the meeting. The mayors of Tetiz and Hunucma were absent, due to their attendance at the local congress with the Archbishop to hear the annual report of the Governess of the State.<sup>3</sup>

In view of the refusal of Tetiz inhabitants regarding the presence of the Virgin in the fiesta honoring her, the

---

<sup>3</sup> Through the local press the Archbishop asked the communities and individuals involved in the conflict to reunite and reconsider in order to continue the religious tradition of both communities.

mayor canceled the fiesta (in its profane aspect). The fiesteros got back the money they had paid at the remate for the rights of the fiesta and the carnival was canceled as well.<sup>4</sup>

The diversity of the organization of the fiesta did not prevent the population from carrying out religious activities: the entrada and salida of gremios from the church, the music, flowers, banners and pabellones appeared on the day corresponding to each gremio. The sacred aspect of the fiesta took place, but as a union of the sacred and the profane, as part of the performance of the homo ludens (Huizinga 1984) 1991 and 1992 were years of miscarried fiesta.

The miscarriage of the fiesta generated by the political differences briefly exposed above reveals the existence of a tangible relationship between the religious and political fields, but, at the same time reveals the relationship between both of them in which religion is express in economical and political terms. What Tapia, following Bourdieu, states respecting the necessity of controlling certain resources in order to legitimize, by referring to the sacred, positions of power (Tapia 1986:87) might apply in this case.

---

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the visit of the Virgin, it is interesting to note that some inhabitants of Tetiz attributed to and interpreted certain disgraces which occurred to inhabitants of Hunucma as the Virgin's anger because of the mistreatment suffered by the parish priest.

The economic realization of the fiesta of Hunucma depends on the specific relationships between Tetiz and Hunucma. The cultural good which is at stake, and which livens up the fiesta, and makes it profitable--the Virgin of Tetiz--but, it is completely out of the control of the population of Hunucma, despite their political inclinations. It is, then, a space of transaction at the same level of the social structure, but with different strengths. The possible economical superiority of Hunucma decreases by the possession of a cultural good, by the control of an aspect of the religious field. There was noted a certain autonomy of the social agents who found themselves in a position of subordination where the Archbishop's mediation was not enough to resolve the conflict.

The political inclination of the parish priest of Hunucma, his supposed ability of summoning and his adhesion to the Partido Acción Nacional (as calimed by PRI followers of Hunucma) forced the inhabitants of Tetiz to take political measures which affected the ways the leaders of the parish made arrangements to worship the absent Virgin. What is certain is that the entrada and salida of the gremios and other activities customary to them, as well as the symbolic representation of the Virgin's arrival at the end of the fiesta could not, in any way, prevent what had happened from the beginning: the miscarriage of the fiesta. This miscarriage means that, although there are different

and well established tasks for cargadores, gremios, church and fun fair (fiesta), all of them form a unity which embraces both the sacred man and the ludic man in one space, the space of the fiesta.

#### ARCHIVAL REERENCES

AHDY Archivo Histórico Diocesano de Yucatán. Mérida, Yucatán México. Official documents.

ACCA Archivo Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona. Centro de Apoyo para la Investigación Histórica en Yucatán. Mérida, Yucatán, México. Official documents and collections of letters.

BCRM Biblioteca Carlos R. Menéndez. Mérida, Yucatán, México. Collection of newspapers.

HJMPS Hemeroteca José Ma. Pino Suárez. Mérida, Yucatán México. Collection of newspapers.

# REFERENCE LIST

AGUIRRE BELTRAN, GONZALO. 1973. Regiones de refugio. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

ANCONA, ELIGIO. 1978. Historia de Yucatán. Mérida: Universidad de Yucatán. 4 Vols.

AZIZZ NASSIF, ALBERTO. N.D. La cultura subalterna en México. Una aproximación teórica. México: Centro de Estudios Ecuménicos.

BALANDIER, GEORGES. 1975. Antropo-lógicas. Barcelona: Península.

BAÑOS RAMIREZ, OTHON. 1993. "La invasión urbana: Mérida y la zona henequenera," in Mérida: el azar y la memoria. Edited by APAUADY, pp. 201-27. Mérida: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán.

BAQUEIRO, SERAPIO. 1991. Ensayo histórico sobre las revoluciones de Yucatán desde el año de 1840 hasta 1864. Mérida: UADY. 5 Vols.

BARABAS, ALICIA. 1979. Colonialismo y racismo en Yucatán: una aproximación histórica y contemporánea. Revista mexicana de ciencias políticas y sociales. 97:105-39.

-----1987. Utopías indias. México: Grijalbo.

-----1993. El aparicionismo en América Latina: Religión, territorio e identidad. Guchachi Reza 35:37-48.

BARABAS, ALICIA AND MIGUEL BARTOLOME. 1986. "La pluralidad desigual en Oaxaca," in Etnicidad y pluralismo cultural. Edited by Barabas, Alicia and Miguel Bartolomé (Coords.), pp. 15-95. México: INAH

BARRERA OSORIO, ABELARDO. 1961. La Mérida colonial. Episodios históricos, una piadosa leyenda y un cuento coloniales. Mérida: N.P.

BARTH, FREDRIK. 1976. Los grupos étnicos y sus fronteras. México: FCE.

BARTOLOME, MIGUEL. 1979. "Conciencia étnica y autogestión indígena," in Documentos de la segunda reunión de Barbados. Edited by Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, pp. 309-24. México: Nueva Imagen.

----- . 1988. La dinámica social de los mayas de Yucatán: pasado y presente de la situación colonial. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

BARTOLOME, MIGUEL AND ALICIA BARABAS. 1981. La resistencia maya. Relaciones interétnicas en el oriente de la península de Yucatán. México: INAH.

BONFIL, GUILLERMO. 1991. Pensar nuestra cultura. México: Alianza.

BOURDIEU, PIERRE. 1973. "Campo intelectual y proyecto creador," in Problemas del estructuralismo. Edited by Jean Puillon pp. 135-82. México: Siglo XXI Editores.

BOURDIEU, PIERRE AND JEAN CLAUDE PASSERON. 1981. La reproducción. Elementos para una teoría del sistema de enseñanza. Barcelona: LAIA.

BRANDES, STANLEY. 1988. Power and Persuasion. Fiestas and Social Control in Rural Mexico. Philadelphia: University of Pensilvania.

BURNS, ALLAN. 1983. An Epoch of Miracles. Austin: University of Texas Press.

XI CENSO GENERAL DE POBLACION Y VIVIENDA. 1990. México: INEGI.

CAILLOIS, ROGER. 1984. El hombre y lo sagrado. México: FCE.

CANCIAN, FRANK. 1965. Economics and Prestige in a Maya Community. The religious Cargo System in Zinacantan. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

-----. 1990. "The Zinacantan Cargo Waiting List as a Reflection of Social, Political and Economic Changes" in Class, Politics, and Popular Religion in Mexico and Central America. Edited by Lynn Stephen and James Dow, pp. 63-76. Washington: The Society for Latin American Anthropology and The American Anthropology Association.

CARDENAS Y VALENCIA, FRANCISCO DE. 1937. Relación historial eclesiástica de la Provincia de Yucatán de la Nueva España, escrita en el año de 1639. México: Antigua Librería Robredo.

CARDOSO DE OLIVEIRA, ROBERTO. 1976. Identidade, etnia e estrutura social. Brasil: Libreria Pionera Editora.

CARRILLO Y ANCONA, CRESCENCIO. 1979. El Obispado de Yucatán. Historia de su fundación y de sus obispos. Mérida: Fondo Editorial de Yucatán.

CERVERA ANDRADE, ALEJANDRO. 1961. El cristo de Ichmul. Leyendas de Yucatán. Revista de la Universidad de Yucatán. 111(17):52-57.

CHAMBERLAIN, ROBERT. 1982. Conquista y colonización de Yucatán. México: Porrúa.

CHANCE, JOHN. 1990. "Changes in Twentieth-Century Mesoamerican Cargo Systems," in Class, Politics, and Popular Religion in Mexico and Central America. Edited by Lynn Stephen and James Dow, pp. 27-42. Washington: The Society for Latin American Anthropology and The American Anthropology Association.

CHANCE, JOHN K. AND WILLIAM B. TYLOR. 1985. Cofradías and Cargos: An Historical Perspective on the Mesoamerican Civil-Religious Hierarchy. American Ethnologist. 12(1):1-26.

CHARNAY, DESIRE. 1978. Viaje a Yucatán a fines de 1886. Mérida: Fondo editorial de Yucatán.

CIRESE, ALBERTO MARIO. 1979. Ensayos sobre las culturas subalternas. México: Casa Chata.

CIUDAD REAL, ANTONIO DE. 1976. Tratado curioso y docto de las grandezas de la Nueva España. México: UNAM. 2 Vols.

COB, MARIA, YALILE COELLO AND LICIE HERNANDEZ. n.d. "Fiesta tradicional del puerto de Sisal".

CORDOBA, PEDRO. 1989. "Religiosidad popular: arqueología de una noción polémica," in La religiosidad popular. Antropología e historia. Edited by C. Alvarez Santaló, María Jesús Buxó and S. Rodríguez Becerra, pp. 70-81. Barcelona: Fundación Machado and Anthropos.

CRANDON-MALAMUD, LIBBET. 1993. Blessing of the Virgin in Capitalist Society: The Transformation of a Rural Bolivian Fiesta. American Anthropologist. 95(3):574-96.

DEVEREUX, GEORGE. 1977. De la ansiedad al método en las ciencias del comportamiento. México: Siglo XXI Editores.

DEWALT, BILLIE R. 1975. Changes in the Cargo Systems of Mesoamerica. Anthropological Quarterly. 48:87-105.



DIEZ, JUAN MARIA. 1989. "La significación de los santuarios," in La religiosidad popular. Hermandades, romerías y santuarios. Edited by C. Alvarez Santaló, María Jesús Buxó and R. Rodríguez Becerra, pp. 268-81. Barcelona: Fundación Machado and Anthropos.

DOW, JAMES. 1974. Santos y supervivencias. Funciones de la religión en una comunidad Otomí. México: INI.

DURKHEIM, EMILE. 1954. The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. New York: The Free Press.

ELIADE, MIRCEA. 1991. Tratado de historia de las religiones. México: Era.

ESPINOSA RIESTRA, FINA. 1942. "La fiesta del Señor de las Ampollas," in Mérida. Monografía. Edited by Fausto A. Hijuelos, pp. 159-160. México: SEP.

FALLA, RICARDO. 1969. Análisis horizontal del sistema de cargos. América Indígena. 29(4):923-47.

FARRISS, NANCY. 1984. Maya Society under Colonial Rule. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

FAVIER, ANNELEISE. N.D. El cristo negro de Ichmul. Unpublished Document.

FERNANDEZ, FRANCISCO. 1984. Cultura y migración en Yucatán (Xocén y Cuzamá). BA thesis, Universidad de Yucatán.

----- 1988a. Resistencia cultural y religiosidad popular. Los gremios de Chuburna de Hidalgo, Mérida, Yucatán. MA thesis. Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca.

----- 1988b. Gremios y fiesta en Chuburna de Hidalgo, Mérida, Yucatán. Un esbozo etnográfico. Revista de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. 167:26-34.

----- 1990. Resistencia cultural y religiosidad popular. Los gremios en Chuburna de Hidalgo, Mérida, Yucatán. Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán. 101:20-34.

FERNANDEZ, FRANCISCO AND ELLA F. QUINTAL. 1992. Fiestas y fiestas. Revista de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. 183:39-48.

FERNANDEZ, FRANCISCO AND GENNY NEGROE. 1990. "Fiesta and identity in Yucatán". New Orleans. Paper presented at the 89th Annual Meeting of American Anthropological Association.

FERNANDEZ TEJEDO, ISABEL. 1990. La comunidad maya de Yucatán. Siglos XVI y XVII. México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

FRAGA, JULIA. La inmigración y sus principales efectos en la costa yucateca. MA thesis, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán.

FREUNDENTHAL, SOLVEIG. 1988. "What To Tell and How To Show It," in Anthropological Filmmaking. Edited by Jack R. Rollwagen, pp. 123-34. New York: Harwood Academic Publishers.

FUENTES, JOSE. 1991. "Mérida: Ciudad media o metrópoli regional del Sureste". México. Paper presented at the Antropología y Ciudad Congress.

GARCIA BERNAL, MANUELA CRISTINA. 1978. Población y encomienda en Yucatán bajo los Austrias. Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispanoamericanos.

GARCIA CANCLINI, NESTOR. 1986. Las culturas populares en el capitalismo. México: Nueva Imagen.

-----, 1988. "La crisis teórica en la investigación sobre cultura popular," in Teoría e investigación en la antropología social mexicana. Edited by Memorias, pp. 67-96. México: Casa Chata.

GARCIA GARCIA, JOSE LUIS. 1989. "El contexto de la religiosidad popular," in La religiosidad popular. Antropología e historia. Edited by C. Alvarez Santaló, María Jesús Buxó and S. Rodríguez Becerra, pp. 19-29. Barcelona: Fundación Machado and Anthropos.

GIL, ENRIQUE. 1991. Estado de fiesta. Madrid: Espasa and Mañana.

GIMENEZ, GILBERTO. 1978. Cultura popular y religión en el Anáhuac. México: Centro de Estudios Ecuménicos.

-----, 1982. Para una concepción semiótica de la cultura. Document unpublished.

-----, n.d. La cultura popular. Problemática y líneas de investigación. Document unpublished.

GLUCKMAN, MAX. 1963. Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa. London: Cohen and West.

GONZALEZ, ESTELLA MARIA. 1978. Perspectiva religiosa en Yucatán. 1517-1571. México: El Colegio de México.

GONZALEZ NAVARRO, MOISES. 1979. Raza y tierra. La guerra de Castas de Yucatán. México: El Colegio de México.

GONZALEZ SANCHEZ, JORGE. 1981. Sociología de las culturas subalternas. México: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco.

GOODMAN, FELICITAS D. 1972. "The Apostolics of Yucatan. A Case Study of a Religious Movement," in Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change. Edited by Erika Bourguignon, pp. 134-56. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

GRAMSCI, ANTONIO. 1976. Cuadernos de la Cárcel: literatura y vida nacional. México: Juan Pablos.

HAKS, WILLIAM. 1990. Referential Practice. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

HANSEN, ASAE T. 1934. "The Ecology of a Latin American City," in Race and Culture Contacts. Edited by E.B. Reuter, pp. 124-42. New York: McGraw Hill.

HANSEN ASAE T. AND JUAN R. BATARRACHEA. 1984. Mérida. Su transformación de capital colonial a naciente metrópoli. México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

HERVIK, PETER. 1992. Learning To Be "indian": Aspects of a New Ethnic and Cultural Identity. Folk. 34:63-80.

----- . 1991. The Position of Language and Cultures in the Yucatecan Landscape. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Copenhagen.

HEWITT DE ALCANTARA, CYNTHIA. 1988. Imágenes del campo mexicano. La interpretación antropológica del México rural. México: El Colegio de México.

HUIZINGA, JOHAN. 1984. Homo ludens. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

IRIGIYEN, RENAN. 1973. Calendario de fiestas tradicionales de Yucatán. Mérida: Ediciones del Gobierno del Estado.

KNOWLTON, ROBERT J. 1992. "La iglesia mexicana y la Reforma: respuesta y resultados," in Iglesias y religiosidad. pp. 153-71. México: El Colegio de México.

KROTZ, ESTEBAN. 1987. Utopía, asombro, alteridad: consideraciones metateóricas acerca de la investigación antropológica. Estudios Sociológicos. 5(14):283-301.

-----, 1991. A panoramic view of recent mexican anthropology. Current Anthropology. 32(2):183-88.

-----, 1993. Cultura e ideología: un campo temático en expansión durante los años ochenta. Estudios sobre las culturas contemporáneas. 5(15):59-80.

LANDA, FR. DIEGO DE. 1973. Relación de las cosas de Yucatán. México: Porrúa.

LARA, HUMBERTO. 1959. Sisal. Ensayo monográfico. Mérida: Dirección de Prensa y Publicidad del Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán.

LIZANA, FR. BERNARDO DE. 1893. Historia de Yucatán. Devocionario de Nuestra Señora de Izamal y conquista espiritual. México: El Museo Nacional de México.

LOMBARDI, LUIGI. 1989. "El hambre como derrota de Dios," in La religiosidad popular. Antropología e historia. Edited by C. Alvares Santaló, María Jesús Buxó and S. Rodríguez Becerra, pp. 55-69. Barcelona: Fundación Machado and Anthropolos.

LOPEZ COGOLLUDO, FR. DIEGO. 1957. Historia de Yucatán. México: Academia Literaria. 2 Vols.

MALDONADO, LUIS. 1989. "La religiosidad popular," in La religiosidad popular. Antropología e historia. Edited by C. Alvares Santaló, María Jesús Buxó and S. Rodríguez Becerra, pp. 30-43. Barcelona: Fundación Machado and Anthropolos.

MANDIANES CASTRO, MANUEL. 1989. "Caracterización de la religión popular," in La religiosidad popular. Antropología e historia. Edited by C. Alvares Santaló, María Jesús Buxó and S. Rodríguez Becerra, pp. 44-54. Barcelona: Fundación Machado and Anthropolos.

MATHEWS, HOLLY F. 1985. "We are mayordomo": a reinterpretation of women's role in the Mexican cargo system. American Ethnologist. 17:285-301.

MEYERS, ALBERT AND DIANE E. HOPKINS. 1988. Manipulating the Saints. Hamburgo: Wayasbah.

MIGUELES, LORENZO. 1985. Derecho Canónico. Madrid: Ediciones Católicas.

MOLINA SOLIS, JUAN FRANCISCO. 1988. Historia de Yucatán. Mérida: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán.

MONOGRAFIA DE YUCATAN. 1986. México: Secretaría de Educación Pública.

MORENO, ISIDORO. 1985. Cofradías y hermandades andaluzas, Estructura, simbolismo e identidad. Sevilla: Editoriales Andaluzas Unidas.

MURPHY, MICHAEL D. AND CARLOS SOLIS. 1983. Cooperación y rivalidad en la costa de Yucatán: implicaciones para la expansión de la industria pesquera. Yucatán: historia y economía. 39:3-21.

NEGROE, GENNY. 1984. La cofradía de Yucatán en el siglo XVIII. BA thesis, Universidad de Yucatán.

----- . 1990. Identidad social en Chuburna. Boletín de la Escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán. 16(101):5-19.

O'GORMAN, EDMUNDO. 1979. Historia de las divisiones territoriales en México. México: Porrúa.

OSSOWSKI, STANISLAW. 1974. "El esquema de gradación," in La desigualdad social. Edited by Claudio Stern, pp. 71-94. México: SEP.

PATCH, ROBERT. 1976. La formación de estancias y haciendas en Yucatán durante la colonia. Boletín de la escuela de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Universidad de Yucatán. 19:41-61.

PEREZ ALCALA, FELIPE. 1914. Cosas de antaño. Mérida: Constitucionalista.

PINTADO, OSCAR. 1982. Estructura productiva y pérdida de la indianidad en Yucatán en el proceso henequenero (dos ensayos). México: Casa Chata.

PROGRAMA DE DESARROLLO DE LA ZONA HENEQUENERA DE YUCATAN. 1992-1994. México: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán.

QUEZADA, SERGIO. 1990. Pueblos y caciques yucatecos. Ph.D. Dissertation, El Colegio de México.

QUINTAL, ELLA F. 1992. "Las fiestas en el oriente de Yucatán," in Memorias del Seminario Quinientos años de Contactos Indo-ibéricos. Diálogo interamericano. Edited by Luis A. Vázquez Pasos, pp. 107-18. Mérida: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán.

-----. 1993. Fiestas y gremios en el oriente de Yucatán. Mérida: CULTUR.

REDFIELD, ROBERT. 1941. The Folk Culture of Yucatan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

REDFIELD, ROBERT AND ALFONSO VILLARJOAS. 1962. Chan Kom: A Maya Village. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

REED, NELSON. 1971. La guerra de castas de Yucatán. México: Era.

REINA, RUBEN. 1973. La ley de los Santos. Un pueblo Pokoman y su cultura de comunidad. Guatemala: Seminario de Integración social de Guatemala No. 32.

RODRIGUEZ, MARIANGELA. 1991. Hacia la estrella con la pasión y la ciudad a cuestas. Semana Santa en Iztapalapa. México: CIESAS.

ROIZ, MIGUEL. 1982. "Fiesta, comunicación y significado," in Tiempo de fiesta. Edited by Honorio M. Velasco, pp. 97-150. Madrid: Tres.Catorce.Diecisiete.

ROSADO VEGA, LUIS. 1947. Lo que ya pasó y aun vive. México: Cultura.

RUS, JAN AND ROBERT WASSERSTROM. 1980. Civil-Religious Hierarchies in Central Chiapas: A Critical Perspective. American Ethnologist. 7(3):466-78.

SANCHEZ DE AGUILAR, PEDRO. 1937. Informe contra idolorum cultores del Obispado de Yucatán. Mérida: Triay e Hijos.

SCHOLES, FRANCE V. AND ELEANOR B. ADAMS. EDS. 1938. Don Diego Quijada Alcalde Mayor de Yucatán. 1561-1565. México: Antigua Librería Robredo de José Porrúa e Hijos. 2 Vols.

SIERRA O'REILLY, JUSTO. 1987. "Las diligencias y las ferias de Izamal," in Justo Sierra O'Reilly. pp. 75-83. México: Consejo Editorial de Yucatán.

SMITH, ROBERT J. 1975. The Art of the Festival. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas.

SMITH, WALDEMAR. 1977. The Fiesta System and Economic Change. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

STEPHEN, LYNN AND JAMES DOW (EDS). 1990. Class, Politics, and Popular Religion in Mexico and Central America. Washington: The Society for Latin American Anthropology and the American Anthropological Association.

STEPHENS, JOHN. 1984. Viajes a Yucatán. Mérida: Producción Editorial Dante, S.A. 2 Vols.

SUAREZ, VICTOR. 1979. El español que se habla en Yucatán. México: Universidad de Yucatán.

----- . 1981. El obispado de Yucatán. Historia de su fundación y de sus obispos 1887-1979. Mérida: Fondo Editorial de Yucatán.

TAPIA, CARLOS. 1984. "Comercio y producción de artesanías en Halacho, Yucatán (1950-1980)," in Capitalismo y vida rural en Yucatán. Edited by Francisco Anda Vela., pp. 153-75. Mérida: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán.

TAPIA, JESUS. 1986. Campo religioso y evolución política en el bajo Zamorano. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán.

THOMPSON, RICHARD. 1974. Aires de progreso. Cambio social en un pueblo maya de Yucatán. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

TOMMASI, LEOPOLDO. 1951. La ciudad de ayer, de hoy y de mañana. México: Cultura.

TURNER, VICTOR. 1991. The Ritual Process. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

VAN ZANTWIJK, R.A.M. 1974. Los servidores de los santos. La identidad social y cultural de una comunidad tarasca en México. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista

VARGUEZ, LUIS. 1990. Mérida: algunos aspectos de su transformación y perspectiva actual. Mérida.: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán.

VARON, RAFAEL. 1982. Cofradías de indios y poder local en el Perú colonial: Huaraz, siglo XVII. Allpanchis. 17(20):127-46.

VELASCO, HONORIO M. 1982. "Introducción," in Tiempo de fiesta. Edited by Honorio M. Velasco, pp. 7-25. Madrid: Tres.Catorce.Diecisiete.

VILLANUEVA, NANCY. 1984. "El fomento estatal de las artesanías," in Capitalismo y vida rural en Yucatán. Edited by Francisco Anda Vela, pp. 143-51. Mérida: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán.

VOGT, EVON. 1965. Ceremonial Organization in Zinacantan. Ethnology. 1(4):39-52.

WALDECK, FEDERICO DE. 1930. Viaje pintoresco y arqueológico a la Provincia de Yucatán durante los años 1834-1836. Mérida: Compañía Tipográfica Yucateca.

WARREN, KAY B. 1989. The Symbolism of Subordination. Indian Identity in a Guatemalan Town. Austin: University of Texas Press.

WOLF, ERIC R. 1957. Closed Corporated Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Java. Southwestern Journal of Anthropology. 13 (1):1-18.

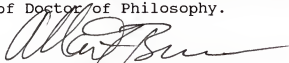
WOODRICK, ANNE C. 1989. The Sign of the Cross: Folk Catholicism in a Rural Yucatecan Community. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California.



#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Francisco J. Fernández was born in Mérida, Yucatán, México, in 1960. He graduated from "Escuela Modelo" High School, Mérida, Yucatán, México, in 1978. In 1984 he received his bachelor's degree in social anthropology from the Universidad de Yucatán, Mérida, Yucatán. In March of 1988 he received his Master of Arts with a major in sociology from the Universidad Autónoma "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Oaxaca, México. In January of 1989 he began his graduate studies in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Florida. Now, he is a professor at the Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas at the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



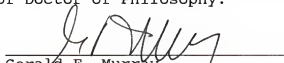
Allan F. Burns, Chair  
Professor of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



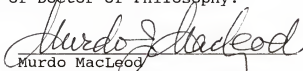
Paul L. Doughty  
Distinguished Service  
Professor of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Gerald F. Murray  
Associate Professor  
of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Murdo MacLeod  
Graduate Research Professor  
of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



Hernán Vera  
Associate Professor  
of Sociology

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 1994

---

Dean, Graduate School